The Captain of the "Dolphin"

AND

OTHER POEMS OF THE SEA

FREDERICK J. JOHNSTON-SMITH

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BY

FREDERICK J. JOHNSTON-SMITH

"The sea, that home of marvels"
W. E. GLADSTONE, *Juventus Mundi*

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WITH FONDEST AFFECTION

THE AUTHOR

DEDICATES THESE PAGES

TO

His Wife

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PREFACE

AT a time when so many volumes of verse are placed before the public, the author feels that in venturing to add one more to the number, something approaching an apology is called for. He begs to offer it and call attention to a truth which in some degree excuses him. Though the British people are the greatest maritime nation the world has ever seen, and the command of the seas the object for which they are prepared to make any sacrifice, it is surprising how comparatively little English verse makes the sea and the sailor its theme. He ventures to hope, therefore, the maritime character of the following poems may save them from a cold rejection, if it does not insure for them some measure of welcome.

If the words of Byron, in *Childe Harold*, have for the reader the charm and truth they have for the author, he will be indulgent—

> "I have loved thee, ocean! and my joy
> Of youthful sports was on thy breast to be

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Borne, like thy bubbles, onward : from a boy
I wanton'd with thy breakers—they to me
Were a delight ; and if the fresh'ning sea
Made them a terror—'t was but a pleasing fear,
For I was as it were a child of thee,
And trusted to thy billows far and near,
And laid my hand upon thy mane—as I do here."

The use of a few nautical terms has been unavoidable. A glossary of those at all likely to be unfamiliar will be found in the appendix.

CONTENTS

THE CAPTAIN OF THE "DOLPHIN"—

PAGE

I. The Coming of the Captain 13
By the Inn fire 13

II. The Captain's Story 17
He refers briefly to his Early Life 17
He bids his Bride farewell, and sails for Newfoundlànd 18
The Ice is seen and entered 20
St. John's, Newfoundlànd, is reached 21
He dreams of Wife and Home 22
A Seaman awakens him 26
The Harbour Scene 26
The Sailing of the Sealing Fleet 28
The Ship is overtaken by a Storm 30
She ships a Sea and loses a portion of her Crew . . 31
She is Ice-bound 33
The Dream 34
He goes Aloft once more, and determines to walk to the Shore 35
He falls into a Trance 36
He is carried to the Ship 37
A Gale releases the Ship 38
He awakens from his Trance, saves the Ship from destruction, and hears his Wedding Bells . . 40
The Storm passes away, and a Night of great Beauty ensues 42
He Sleeps and Dreams again 44
The Fleet is seen 44

THE CAPTAIN OF THE "DOLPHIN"—*continued* GE

The Ship is laden and returns to St. John's . . 45
Ice, Storm, and Shipwreck 46
The wind releases the Ship, and the St. John's Haven is reached 48
The Ship enters Port, and he hears from Home . . 50
The Ship sails for Davis' Strait in pursuit of Whales . 51
A Mysterious Occurrence 53
A Phantom Wreck rises from the Deep and sinks again 55
The Ship goes on her way, and again he dreams . . 57
During a Storm a Man is lost Overboard, and the Captain sees strange Sights 59
Land is seen 61
The Ship reaches Dundee, and he hastens to his Home 63

III. What followed the Captain's Story . . . 66
The Host expresses thanks and asks a Question . 66
The Captain induces the Host to tell a strange Story . 67
A Strange Old Barque 68
The Windlass and the Bell 69
Silence is kept for a space 70
The Captain asks a Question and makes a Revelation . 71

IV. The Shipwreck 72
A Distress Signal is heard, and Dawn breaks . . 72
The Scene from the Cliffs 73
The Captain says Farewell 74

V. The Fisherman's Story 76
The Manning of the *Petrel* 76
The *Petrel* is Launched 78
The Storm drives the *Petrel* backwards, and the Wreck breaks asunder 80
The Captain alarms the Fishermen . . . 81
The Boat is turned about and sails Homewards, but upsets 82
He indulges in a little Fisher Philosophy . . 85

THE CAPTAIN OF THE "DOLPHIN"—*continued* PAGE

VI. The Passing of the Storm 87
The Author watches the coming of Calm and Sunshine 87
The Author muses and slumbers 89
The Author dreams 90
The Host awakens him 91

VII. Conclusion 92
Morning 92
Departure 93

THE ARMADA CALLED "INVINCIBLE"—

The Captains on the Hoe 94
Arrival of Fleming 96
The Sailing of the Sea Dogs 102
The Signal-fires are lit 104
The Armada is sighted 105
The First English Attack 108
The Spaniards reach Calais 113
The English Fire-ships 119
The Flight of the Spanish Fleet 123
The Second English Attack 124
The Spanish Council of War 127
The Spaniards steer Northwards 130
The English abandon the Pursuit 132
How England received the News 133

LOUIS PHILIPPE DELARUE—

I. The Sailing and the Wreck 135
II. The Apparition 142
III. The Bottle on the Beach 147

IN THE INDIAN OCEAN—

I. Sunrise 153
II. Noon 155
III. Sunset 158
IV. Midnight 160

PAGE

THE DEMON AND THE DERELICT . . . 162
MAKING THE HARBOUR LIGHT . . 168
THE SONG OF THE ICEBERG 174
THE FULL-RIGGED SHIP "CENTURION" . . . 184
IN THE CLEFT OF A ROCK 191
A SEASIDE REVERIE 199
WRECK 206
THE WATER BELLS 209
AN OUTWARD BOUND 214
A MOTHER'S DREAM 216
THE SAILOR'S BURIAL 217
BEWILDERMENT 218

APPENDIX 221
I. Note 221
II. Glossary of Nautical Terms 223

THE

CAPTAIN OF THE "DOLPHIN"

Part I.

The Coming of the Captain.

"Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!"
SHAKESPEARE, *Henry IV.*

By the Inn Fire.

A LONELY inn looks out upon the sea
That laves and frets the northern Cornish coast,
Where I, unwilling guest, was weather-bound,
And sat till late in converse with my host.

A night of storm, as gloomy as the grave,
Now moaned and groaned like man in deep distress;
Now piped and thundered round the weathered walls
Like fifes and drums that Satan might possess.

A fire of wood—of planks from off a wreck,
Roared loud in concert up the ample flue.
We talked of gales and dangers on the sea,
The stout ship's loss and drowning of the crew.

Our talk was weird, well suited to the night—
Such talk as stirs the human brain and breast;
And while the clock was striking twelve there came
A bearded, weird, and unexpected guest.

So loud the shriek of winds and thunders' roar—
As if ten thousand demons were the storm—
We did not hear the opening of the door,
So, like a spectre stood his lofty form

Clad as a master-mariner is clad
When in a tempest he commands a ship.
On every garment ran the water down,
And as he stood it fell with heavy drip.

His hair was matted curls, his beard was long,
And every thread of both was snowy white;
His form was straight and sturdy as a mast:
'T was plain he once had been a man of might.

The eyes were blue, their light—it seemed to me—
Like light of stars reflected in the sea,
The forehead wrinkled, the expression sad—
A man who might not or who might be mad.

Just such a man as old sea stories paint
Upon the canvas of a schoolboy's mind—
Or we behold in dreams in after life,
When youth's romance has drifted far behind.

"Pray, take a seat," the host, uprising, said,
"And till the morning make yourself at home.
'T is not a night for such an agèd man
To wander on the Cornish cliffs alone."

A smile spread rippling o'er the stranger's face,
As circle waves spread out upon a pool
Whose calm is broken by the plunging stone
Cast by an urchin on his way to school.

Then laughed he loud and long, as if the host
Had cracked a joke of very rarest kind;
And laughed again, more loudly than before—
So loud, indeed, he drowned the whistling wind.

The host, amazed, stood gazing at the guest,
Disturbed with doubts about the cause of mirth;
And looking like a man who thinks he sees
A spirit-form that haunts this nether earth.

"A little makes you merry, friend," said he;
At which the guest looked stern, and gravely said
"The mirth of man has long been dead in me.
My hope and joy are both for ever fled!

"I laughed because you called me 'agèd man'—
Laughed at myself, without a thought of thee.
Forget my laughter, neighbour, if you can.
Have either of you ever been to sea?"

We answered "No" (which seemed to please him much)
And begged a story of the stormy main.
"A story you shall have," was his reply,
"Which I have told, but may not tell again."

We piled more wood upon the blazing hearth—
More broken planks from off the mould'ring wreck;
The billets, all composed of Norway pine,
Were evidently portions of the deck.

The sailor sat in silence for a while,
Gazing intently at the blazing fire,
Watching the flames, like waves against a cliff,
Fanned by the draught their yellow foam throw higher.

The host and I sat on an oaken bench
Made from two thwarts from out a broken yawl;
He in a chair before the billets' blaze
Which threw his trembling shadow on the wall.

There leaning forth he spread his horny hands
To shade his eyes a little from the light,
While we sat wondering what the tale would be
Told by the roving pilgrim of the night.

When he his tale began, his softened tones
Revealed a man who felt himself forlorn;
But later on he seemed, from time to time,
The incarnation of the howling storm.

Part II.

The Captain's Story.*

"Are his wits safe? Is he not light of brain?"
SHAKESPEARE, *Othello.*

He refers briefly to his Early Life.

My mother died when I was ten, my father long before:
They left me like a castaway upon a lonely shore!
No friend had I to guide or chide, so, feeling I was free,
I chose to be a cabin-boy and sailed away to sea.

Just where the winds and tides of life propelled me, there I went
For thirty years, in twenty ships, to every continent.
I sailed the frigid northern seas amid the frost and snow,
And in the sultry tropics' heat I travelled to and fro.

Those years were all as restless as the restless sea itself!
As Nature gave me common sense I wasted not my pelf.
At length I somewhat weary felt of ceaseless come and go—
Of being like the ocean tide's eternal ebb and flow.

I should have said when I began, that I'm a Scot by birth.
No spot to me is like Dundee in all the varied earth.

* See Appendix.

'T was there my parents gave me life, 'twas there my parents died,
'T was there, an orphan, sailed I forth on life's uncertain tide:

And thither went I when the time had come to take a rest—
A stormy petrel flown to land to make itself a nest.
I found a wife as dear as life, and left her when had flown
My year of rest—the briefest year my stormy life has known!

He bids his Bride farewell, and sails for Newfoundland.

We stood upon the busy quay one darksome winter day,
My bride and I, to say good-bye before I sailed away.
I kissed the lass and kissed again—I kissed with honest pride,
For sweet was she, and meet was she to be a sailor's bride.

I see her now, as then she stood and waved her kerchief white!
I waved my hand; I left the land; and through the breezy night
I dreamed of her, and dreamed again—I lingered by her side:
While she at home was all alone, and dreaming of the tide.

The plighted vow! I feel it now—I feel it night and day!
Oh, precious pearl! Oh, sweetest girl within the Firth of Tay!
Thy sweetness was the sweetness of the sweetest summer rose;
Thy purity the spotlessness of newly fallen snows!

The *Dolphin's* sail embraced the gale, and north we gaily sped;
We saw at night the beacon-light that tells of Peterhead:
Then yards were braced, as on we raced towards the rough defiles
Which lie between a Caithness green and Orkney's stormy isles.

When night was done, a cheerful sun lit up a cheerful sea,
And shed a smile on Stroma Isle and shores of Duncansby:
With lighter gale and cloud of sail we felt inclined to mirth
As, closely trimmed, we lightly skimmed the waves of Pentland Firth.

Then came the rain with change of wind—it soon a tempest blew:
The waters hissed, and in the mist old Scotland sank from view.
Then all around but storms were found and wild Atlantic tide!
By wintry blasts our sturdy masts were long and sorely tried.

With foaming head, on—on we sped! Oh, I remember well
The stormy days, the blinding sprays, the long Atlantic swell!
High on the waves, through broken crests, with foaming leeward rails,
Or deep entroughed, with shrieks aloft, the *Dolphin* fought the gales.

The Ice is seen and entered.

Ten stormy days and stormy nights, and then, to north and west,
A line of white, at fall of night, lay on the ocean's breast,
With belt of light about as bright as when, about to rise,
The queen of night with half her light gleams on the darkened skies.

Of line of white and belt of light we well the meaning knew,
For oft e'er then the *Dolphin's* stem had bravely pierced them through.
As some proud steed on battle-mead rides boldly on the foe
By night and day she ploughed her way amid the ice and snow.

Now veins of blue would let her through and ripple by her side,—
Now like a vise the lifeless ice would hold her in the tide!
And then again the sturdy stem, and steam, and straining mast,
With cogent might would win the fight and leave the danger past.

'Mid bergs in hosts like sheeted ghosts a sinuous way we found—
We saw them north and south and west, we saw them all around!
No life was there except in air the pallid arctic gull;
While overhead, as dark as lead, the clouds hung low and dull.

And then came dreary days and nights—no sun or moon or star!
No change beguiled, the ice was piled in masses near and far;

No vein of blue to let us through, while in the icy grip
Like living thing with broken wing remained the stalwart ship.

Then came a gale—a bitter gale with biting bitter blasts;
And driving snow went o'er us so we could not see the masts;
The ice did shift—began to drift—we felt it strangely stir!
And wildly tossed, with reck'ning lost, we knew not where we were.

That was a night! No ray of light to shew where danger lay;
'Mid tossing floes and crashing bergs we longed for break of day.
'Neath snow in clouds, with glittered shrouds and perils near and far,
We bore our parts with manly hearts in nature's solemn war.

At last came day—with lurid ray the crimson sun uprose;
The blasts all died and left the tide to lie in smooth repose;
The broken ice lay far and wide upon the lurid sea;
With sails uphoist, how we rejoiced to see the course was free!

St. John's, Newfoundland, is reached.

With later day came warmer ray, and gaily sang the crew
Of sunlit ships with sunlit sails on sunlit seas of blue.
The man aloft gave joyful shout (Oh, I can hear it now!)—
"Ahoy!" said he, "There's land, I see, upon the starboard bow."

The sea-fowl came in wondrous flocks—we blessed the beauteous things!
All round about, and in and out, the air seemed filled with wings,
Now soaring past, now 'twixt the masts, now plunging in the sea:
We knew that soon—ere stroke of noon—the ship would anchored be.

At length, high on the right and left rose cliffs six hundred feet.
We passed a fort, we entered port and saw the anchored fleet.
O'er ships and haven, hills and town, a calm repose was spread—
A snowy pall lay over all as if the whole were dead.

He dreams of Wife and Home.

The plighted vow!—I feel it now—I feel it night and day!
Of her at home I dreamed that night as we so quiet lay—
Of her—my life!—the sweetest wife that ever blessed the earth;
And I could see dear old Dundee and all the Moray Firth.

Again I heard her kindly voice, as when in Kentish vale
By leafy way, at death of day, is heard the nightingale;
Again I heard her laughter sweet, so like the tinkling rills
That gaily run in summer sun adown the Sidlaw Hills.

Once more my pearl, my bonnie girl, lay in my arms' repose
To hear me tell of what befel amid the Arctic floes;
And pale was she to hear from me how near at times was death:
The tears did rise within her eyes, and trembling in her breath.

Then mirth again and merry laugh. Oh, God, it seemed so real!
I see her now! I hear it now, that laughter's silver peal!
I told of pastime in the north and sport among the crew;
How, roused at night, the mimic bear in mimic fight we slew.

And then the scene was strangely changed! 'Twas gladsome summer day:
'Neath cloudless sky my bride and I were by the bonnie Tay.
Life seemed all bliss—one warm, long kiss—and we the meeting lips!
'Twas haying time, and I and mine thought not of storms and ships.

The new-mown hay made sweet the day; the Tay was strangely bright
With brilliant birds and brilliant boats. 'Twas an enchanting sight!
With sail and oar the boats went by with wondrous skill controlled—
The sails were sails of flashing silk, the oars were oars of gold.

Both they who rowed the golden oars and they who trimmed the sail
Were friends whom we had known through life: they gave us joyful hail
As, kindly smiling, past they swept along the perfumed shore.
With joy-dimmed eyes we gave replies and blessed them o'er and o'er.

Most brilliant birds of wondrous song, with brilliant wings outspread
In graceful flight, with speed of light, came wheeling overhead:
Their wings were white, and strangely bright with wondrous golden tips;
Their flashing breasts and sunlit crests were like my darling's lips.

Our marriage bells we heard again—a madly merry chime!
The air seemed filled, with music thrilled, and throbbed responsive time.
The form was read—again we said, each one, a glad "*I will*";
Another burst of marriage chimes, and then the bells stood still.

Through sunny hours I culled the flowers that bloomed about her feet,
And deftly twined, with green combined, to make a chaplet sweet.
Oh, sweet indeed the chaplet was!—"My love," I gently said,
"This chaplet I have made for you"—and laid it on her head.

To my surprise her gentle eyes o'erflowed with blinding tears,
While, pale in look, she plainly shook as if with sudden fears!
She left home clad in Scottish plaid which now turned strangely white—
As white as snow or Arctic floe seen in Aurora's light.

I calmed her fears, I dried her tears, and held her in
my arms.
'T is strange, thought I, that she should cry and feel such
wild alarms;
And while I thought, a wind uprose (as chill as death!
I deem)—
The wreath was tossed and quickly lost within the passing
stream.

The brilliant light and beauty died as dies a sunset hue;
The birds all fled from overhead (as hopes are wont to do);
The brilliant boats became as jet; the waters dark as night;
The rowers and their golden oars became a ghastly white!

Then darkness fell, 'twas dark as hell—it fell like falling pall
On faded scene and faded stream, till blackness covered all!
One beam alone, like marble stone, fell on my trembling
bride;
No sound I heard save one lone bird and rush of passing
tide.

"Wreath! wreath!" cried she. "Ah, woe is me!" Oh,
frenzy of the dream!
With piercing shriek she fled to seek the chaplet in the
stream.
I heard her plunge; I heard her rise; I saw an outstretched
hand—
'T was lustrous white and mocked the night. Then I
became unmanned!

I strove to plunge, but could not plunge—some demon held
me back,
While I beheld the hand uplift amid surrounding black!
Adown the stream the drifting hand grew paler as it swept;
In grief I sank upon the bank, and long and sorely wept.

A Seaman awakens Him.

Then came a knocking—and again, with strokes of chimes between.
"The hand!" I cried; "the snow-white hand has drifted down the stream!"
"Six bells, sir, six!" a voice replied. Then flew the visioned scene,
And glad was I to wake and find it all a troubled dream.

My teeth were set (I can't forget!), set like a tightened vise,
My brow was wet with death-like sweat, my hands like blocks of ice!
That hand so white—so strangely bright—I saw through standing tears;
The piercing cry refused to die upon my terrored ears.

I felt as weak, and looked as pale as if in direful swoon;
The cabin light was dim to sight, and like a clouded moon.
With beating heart and panting breath I sat me up in bed,
And felt as Lazarus must have felt when wakened from the dead.

I felt like one entombed in trance, and longed the sun to see.
My cabin seemed a charnel house which close imprisoned me!
I got me forth and walked the deck—the very sun seemed sad!
Who saw my pace and livid face concluded I was mad.

The Harbour Scene.

I strove to find relief of mind, and long I strove in vain.
What met the sight recalled the night and burned within the brain,

For boats there were, and birds there were, and rowers rowing past—
A pageant bright with morning light upon the waters cast.

The rowers hailed the *Dolphin's* crew: I thought they called to me,
And feared again my fevered brain would all its horrors see.
Had they returned—if I had heard that shriek and plunge again,
I must confess, with sore distress I should have gone insane.

My mind was calmed, and joy returned, as upwards sailed the sun;
But times there were when thoughts would stir which made me feel undone.
Yes—thoughts of her—the bonnie heart I left in old Dundee,
Who watched with sighs and tear-dimmed eyes the *Dolphin* sail to sea.

I thought about the busy quay and darksome winter day;
I thought about the sweet good-bye, and how I sailed away.
In thought I kissed my lass again, and kissed with honest pride,
For sweet was she, and meet was she to be a sailor's bride.

I tried to think what life would be—a long and weary day!—
Without my pearl, the sweetest girl in all the Firth of Tay.
A shadow fell across my soul; then came unbidden tears,
And I was tossed and almost lost in waves of hopes and fears.

There have been times, there will be times (I think you 'll both agree),
When, looking back, a thoughtful mind can strange connections see
Between a grief and dream of grief. On this I 'll say no more,
But just remark, *great sorrows cast their shadows long before.*

The sun went on; and on I mused till near the close of day;
The *Dolphin's* masts their shadows cast on objects far away.
The evening lit her vestal lamp—the lonely star I blessed!
My stormy life seemed halcyon and full of nameless rest.

Night brought the bright Aurora's light with mystic, fitful flash—
Round her bespangled azure robe she bound a silver sash.
I stayed to watch the dancing light until it failed and died:
The clock struck twelve when night unbound and laid her sash aside.

The Sailing of the Sealing Fleet.

The day we sailed it briskly blew. The world was all aglow,
And down the hills poured countless rills from off the melting snow.
A gladsome sight—a world bedight lay spread before my eyes—
The haven, town, and shipping made a picture to surprise!

At anchor lay a score of ships of stalwart mould and main,
With oaken hides and iron sides to meet the ice's strain—
To meet the floes and fight the floes that lay await afar—
A sturdy fleet prepared to meet the blows of sturdy war.

In lofty order stood each mast and yard and sail and rope—
A gay array to meet the storms and with the storms to cope.
With flash and dip from shore to ship, again from ship to shore,
The brawny sailors and their boats kept passing evermore.

High over decks and over yards the language of the seas—
A thousand coloured pennons—kissed and flirted with the breeze:
The town and shore, each street and store, appeared one busy hive;
The ships, the boats, the wooden quays with men were all alive.

One humming rout, with laugh and shout, all eager for the sound
Of engine's throb and flapping sails wide-spread and outward bound.
It came at last! Each windlass clicked in time to lusty song;
The engines beat; the sails spread out to bear the fleet along.

From lips on ships, from lips on shore came loud and lusty cheers,
While wives and sweethearts waved their hands and wiped away their tears.
The very birds which winged about seemed in excitement bound
As, far and near, cheer after cheer burst forth with thrilling sound.

The engines throbbed like throbbing hearts of living, moving things;
Ship after ship, like giant bird, spread out her giant wings:

Beyond the port, beyond the fort and frowns of Signal Hill,
The cheers on shore we faintly heard, and heard more faintly still.

Before our bows the waters hissed, and gurgled far behind;
They leaped and laughed along the sides and sported in the wind.
The frowning northern headland passed, the wheel was made to spin—
With "Yo, heave ho!" we gaily hauled the starboard-braces in.

On fled the fleet, and wildly well the lively *Dolphin* flew
Where, snow bedight and bathed in light, lay storm-worn Baccalieu.
The wind increased: as bar of steel became each weather-shroud—
Like strings of some colossal harp they softly played aloud.

The Ship is overtaken by a Storm.

The sun went down, and, as it sank, put on an angry glow.
Dark clouds uprolled all edged with gold; then came the blinding snow
And hid the masts and men aloft who furled the flapping sails;
It whirled about the deck and massed against the leeward rails.

Then darkness came—the night closed round, a very night of nights!
'T was like the grave, save where the wave received the *Dolphin's* lights.
The wind came fiercely from the east; and, strange as it may seem,
I saw those rowers with their oars of my late ghastly dream!

Around, about, and in and out the ghastly oarsmen plied!
I saw with strange distinctness how they scorned the wind and tide.
With more than awe, I thought, I saw a helper underneath!
The pallid steersmen shook their heads and ground their ashen teeth.

The shriek and plunge I heard once more, and near the leeward side
The snow-white hand appeared again above the surging tide.
Loud cries I heard, like cries of men beneath a breaking wave.
I put my fingers in my ears and called on God to save.

Up went the *Dolphin's* reeling hull towards the inky skies,
Then down abyss of moan and hiss as if no more to rise;
While, far above, the blackened waves in mass on mass were hurled
With roar and dash like thunder-crash of some dismantled world.

She staggered 'neath the tempest's blasts—they fell like falling lead!
I lost control of my drear soul, and wished that I were dead.
I heard loud calls along the deck from my own stalwart crew,
And, like the scream of that sad dream, they pierced me through and through!

She ships a Sea and loses a portion of her Crew.

Ahead, abeam, a phosph'rous gleam I one dread moment saw!
The bravest heart gave sudden start and stood in trembling awe

To see a wave—a moving grave—high on the *Dolphin* ride!
I held my breath, and felt that death was standing by my side.

In direful sweep the whole dread deep, it seemed, on board had come
With all the howling winds of heaven. Then I became undone!
I saw the wreck—I fell to deck—I felt the ship was doomed!
The icy water swept me on, and then I knew I swooned.

When I recalled the dreadful scene the storm was past and gone;
A dizzy sun in misty sky in dizzy radiance shone:
One pond'rous cloud lay in the west like some stupendous hill;
The wind was dead, the air was warm, the *Dolphin* strangely still.

To south, and north, and far to east (the prospect saddened me!)
A field of white shone in the light—one vast ice-laden sea!
Beneath the heavy western cloud the land was plainly seen:
No sign of life! the dead, white ice lay closely packed between.

'T is strange, thought I, to wake and find the air so warm and bright!
The crew and mate I heard relate how passed the awful night.
The wave I saw, they said, had swept a score from off the deck:
They did not know the men were gone till they had cleared the wreck.

Till day they thought that *I* was lost—swept out to sea alone.
When morning broke, beneath a boat they heard my feeble moan.
I looked, they said as looks the dead, I lay so white and cold:
But lost alarm when I grew warm, outstretched within the hold.

The score of men the sea swept out they only knew were gone.
My soul!—that rolling horror, how it hissed and thundered on.
One half the boats went overboard, the other half were smashed
Excepting one, and she my own, which had been tightly lashed.

One thing there was which wondrous seemed, the mate and men agreed,
The tempest and the sea were stilled with most amazing speed.
And here I burned, for thoughts returned which I would fain have lost!
I saw the ghostly oarsmen row on seas of blackness tossed!

She is Ice-bound.

Ten nights, ten days, and half a day the grim ice hemmed us round;
The sails we spread received no wind, they gave a flapping sound;
And steam was vain as wishes were—the gale had packed the ice;
The *Dolphin* lay by night and day within that ocean vise.

Day after day with morning ray I climbed the stagnant mast;
Again, at noon, and later on with daylight nearly past:
No trace of life could I discern, no sign of open sea—
The spotless desolation 'whelmed my soul in agony.

Each time I went aloft I scanned—I closely scanned the shore:
On coming down I always felt I should have scanned it more.
The thought was such it troubled much, till into grief I burst—
That night I dreamed a solemn dream—I dreamed that I was cursed!

The Dream.

Long years had fled, still overhead the sky unchanged looked on;
The ice had lain without a stain beneath the yellow sun;
No sound of life—no faintest sound had stirred the calm-like death:
The winds were bound—the air of heaven had never blown a breath.

Each lifeless sail had hung outspread against its torpid mast
Till changeless day had wrought decay—they dropped to deck at last:
The once strong ship a victim lay of cankerworm and rust;
The hull and cordage, masts and yards, were crumbling into dust.

About the deck, in twos and threes, three hundred corpses lay.
I shed no tears; but dismal fears consumed me night and day.

No fret I saw—the awful law of Nature stood repealed!
A fearful sign, I felt it mine, of fate for ever sealed.

They—mates and men—had dropped away to sleep the sleep of death;
And, dumb for years, had spoken but to curse with dying breath.
I lived alone, and fate decreed to live for evermore.
And what the cause? 'T was simply *this*—I had not gone on shore.

He goes Aloft once more and determines to walk to the Shore.

When I awoke, with telescope I went aloft again
And closely scanned the distant land, but scanned it all in vain:
I saw but lifeless rock and snow in dismal chaos piled;
No habitation I discerned—no woman, man, or child.

My vivid dream I could but deem a subject for my mirth;
And yet I felt I had to go and walk upon the earth.
For peace of mind, I left behind the *Dolphin* and her crew;
And peace of mind came strangely back as near the land I drew.

I hastened on and hastened more—I scorned the roughest floe,
And saw, at length, with failing strength, men stretched upon the snow.
I counted them. Just twenty men, as if they slumbered there!
With frozen eyes, with frozen clothes, and matted frozen hair.

I called the men, and called again, like one in sorest need;
But no response. They did not stir or give the slightest heed!
These men, said I, are not asleep upon that frozen bed.
Conviction rushed upon my mind: I knew that they were dead.

The men I felt were my own men swept over by the wave:
Though lost at sea, some strange decree forbade an ocean grave.
My senses swam—a darkness fell—I heard the dip of oars.
The darkened river flowed again, and bore the phantom rowers.

I heard again the shriek and plunge beside the river bank!
Then all was silent: mind and sense became a sable blank.

He falls into a Trance.

When thought returned, I heard the tramp of feet in measured tread,
And I was borne as one is borne to rest among the dead.

No sound I heard of spoken word—naught but the tramping sound
Of heavy men, fourscore and ten, upon the frozen ground.
Fourscore and ten of my own men (I felt as chilled as lead)
Had come and found, as they supposed, their missing captain dead.

No power to move or speak had I, but still I plainly saw
A brilliant night, and dismal sight that 'whelmed my soul in awe.
I strove to speak, I strove to shriek! What power, thought I, can save?
With twenty more, from off the shore, they bear me to the grave!

My limbs were stiff and felt as if my life had really fled:
And I was cold, most strangely cold, cold as the frozen dead.
I lay in trance, from which a word—a single word had freed.
A curse, thought I, is on me laid—a direful curse indeed!

The long procession stopped at length beside a gaping grave:
I dumbly prayed and earnestly—"Oh, pity me and save!"
The grave appeared perdition deep as, one by one, the men
Were laid to rest in double row—ten men were laid on ten.

I wondered why they did not lay my body with the rest—
My body with the soul inside and earth upon the breast!
I heard the filling of the grave, I heard each hollow blow
On frozen breasts, of falling clods of mingled earth and snow.

He is carried to the Ship.

Then spake the mate—"The captain take and to the *Dolphin* go!"
As I was borne across the ice I saw the moon was low;
And ere the *Dolphin's* side was reached, I thought I saw afar
That sign of day, the steady ray of silver morning star.

With face upturned, upon the deck my form was gently laid;
From pieces of the broken boats an uncouth coffin made.
The sound of saws and hammer-strokes rang on the morning air;
A flag was laid upon my face, I had such glassy stare.

When morning came I lay within my rough and narrow bed—
Like many more, as I believe, encoffin'd ere they're dead!
For me the ray of gladsome day was turned to blackest night—
The coffin hid, with fastened lid, the sun's belovèd light.

I knew they bare, but knew not where; I felt the place remote
And, later, learned they had upturned the one remaining boat,
And laid my coffin underneath to keep it from the spray.
In silence, darkness and despair their living captain lay!

I heard them walk—I heard them talk—I heard them joke and jest;
I heard them sport—I heard them work—I heard them go to rest:
Each minute seemed a life of man, and every hour an age,
The centre of my book of life a black unwritten page.

The sounds about me lessened till two lonely watchers walked
With heavy tread along the deck, and long and sadly talked.
It seemed at length that even they had also gone to rest,
And silence for eternity had closed about my breast!

A Gale releases the Ship.

At last I heard the sound of wind—a sigh about the masts.
The sound increased, the wind increased and came with hollow blasts:
It mingled with the shouts of men who hailed the coming gale
And ran aloft and from the yards unfurled the willing sail.

The ice began to move and moan; the ship began to creak
And move like some colossal thing awaking out of sleep.
I knew the wind was off the land and blowing far to sea;
The engines beat like beating heart that struggles to be free.

The *Dolphin* had declared a war 'gainst her relentless foes:
Her ally was the whistling wind that swept upon the floes.
She shook and quivered, urging on and ever urging through,
With creaking masts, with straining shrouds, and shouting of her crew.

I heard the wind about the deck—its heavy, dismal sigh:
With solemn moan, like stifled groan, it passed my body by,
Then fiercely smote the invert boat as with intent to break
And rend the shelter from above, and made my coffin shake!

Receiving blows upon her bows the *Dolphin* forced her way:
The ice went grinding by her sides throughout the dismal day.
I felt the ship begin to roll and heard the dash of sea:
The freedom of the motion told the ship was also free.

The wind increased—and still increased! I heard them shorten sail
And pull the ropes and chains about, and say 'twould prove a gale.
My coffin rose and sank again as rose and sank the ship,
And to and fro beneath the boat I felt it slowly slip.

The heavy waves began to dash and smite the *Dolphin's* rail;
And then a blast came rushing past and brought the cutting hail—
On all afloat it fiercely smote, in menace, one would think.
I felt the ship in tremor poised upon an awful brink!

I felt her sink!—a deaf'ning crash—like thunder-peals and rain—
A direful sound which told that she had shipped a sea again
I heard, with cries of terrored men who called to Heaven to save:
The *Dolphin's* deck was all awreck beneath a rolling wave.

Her one remaining boat was smashed, and hurled from over me;
My coffin was upborne, I thought, and carried far to sea!
But no—it smote against a mast and went to pieces there!
On face and hands I felt a rush of wet and chilly air.

He awakens from his Trance, saves the Ship from destruction, and hears his Wedding Bells.

Throughout my frame I felt return of precious, conscious life:
I stood upon my feet and saw the elements at strife.
Some men were clinging might and main, and some lay on the deck;
I heard the mate the order give to "Clear away the wreck!"

The weather shrouds I firmly grasped and shouted to the mate,
Who, terror-stricken, saw in me a sign of saddest fate:
I stood so near, a cry of fear he gave from depth of soul.
The helmsmen fled, and left the ship without the wheel's control!

With heavy lurch she turned aside upon her heaving bed;
With cries of woe the crew let go and from around me fled.
I called aloud to calm their fears, but called aloud in vain:
The ship, unguided, lay a prey to the engulfing main!

With sound like thunder up aloft the close-reefed canvas
flapped;
The rudder chain beat on the deck (it seemed like death
that rapped!);
Abeam, an inky mass uprose—I knew no power could save
If no one held the helm, and helped the ship to stem the
wave.

As quick as thought I grasped the wheel, and round the
Dolphin flew!
Oh, joy to hear the ringing cheer then uttered by the
crew!
The dismal flaps and raps surceased as on the vessel fled;
The men ran aft, the hand to grasp of him they thought
was dead.

The bells again!—those mellow bells I heard in dreams
before;
A madly merry peal they seemed upon a distant shore.
I heard them, but the crew heard not their sweet and
mystic chime;
They rang in rote with dulcet note, and rang in perfect
time.

"Ring on!" I cried; "ring on, O bells!—ring on for ever-
more!
And waft my soul to her I love, on Scotland's distant shore;
Ring on!—ring on above the storm, above the surging tide;
Ring sweetly on and let me dream I linger by her side!

"Ring on! and let calm peace once more my harassed
spirit bless—
The peace which soothed the ills of life, the peace of her
caress;

Ring on! and let me hear again that voice so low and sweet.
Oh, let the lips that fondly love the lips belovèd meet!"

The sailors stood around, amazed to hear me talk of bells
So far at sea, in such a storm, amid the ocean's swells:
But sweet the dream (if dream it was), surpassing sweet to me,
For sorrow spread her wings and fled—sank 'neath the heaving sea.

The Storm passes away, and a Night of great Beauty ensues.

The tempest lost its fury and a calm crept over all;
The billows doffed their snowy caps as night spread out her pall.
A scene, beyond a poet's dream and fancy's farthest flight,
Lay spread around the *Dolphin* on that well-remembered night.

No scene the world presents to man can such a scene surpass:
We sailed among the scattered ice upon a sea of glass;
The sky was cloudless when the moon in full-orbed radiance rose
From out the eastward-stretching sea, beyond ten thousand floes.

At first upon the crags afar, and on those crags alone,
Beyond a world of tender shade the mellow moonlight shone;
But every star which shed a ray from out the cloudless blue
Had dropped its sister in the sea and pierced it through and through.

As more towards her zenith sailed the silver satellite,
The nearer crags, and nearer still, received her modest light,
Till all the ice became so white, itself a radiance threw—
A world of bright, unsullied light on bright, unsullied blue.

That wondrous night and wondrous light I never need recall!
They stay with me—the ship and we the centre of it all.
The sailors begged me to relate (it would the scene enhance)
How I had passed the fearful hours of my most fearful trance.

They heard, with awe, of all I saw, and my unuttered woe.
I did not think the tale was one to cause the tears to flow;
But such it was—I saw each hardy sailor silent weep
When I recalled the score of dead and grave so dark and deep.

And when I said I wondered why they did not hide me too,
They came, unmanned, to grasp my hand, with "Captain, God bless you!"
Then—then I heard (but they heard not) the bells again a-chime;
The silent ice appeared enrapt, the stars to twinkle time.

And in my heart I said, "Ring on!—ring on for evermore!
And waft my soul to her I love on Scotland's distant shore!
Ring on!—I feel her spirit near, my troubled soul to bless;
Ring on!—till I, in fancy, feel her gentle hand's caress."

When peace enfolds and pleasure thrills, the flight of time is fleet,
And we, like dancers, follow time on swift and blithesome feet:
The night seemed hardly half gone by, when, on the darkened skies
I saw the rosy blush of morn, and then, the sun uprise.

He Sleeps and Dreams again.

Exhausted nature's law is stern—she bids us all obey.
With peaceful mind I went to rest and slept till near mid-
day;
And in my dreams the city's quays I saw, sea-worn and brown:
A perfect day—the *Dolphin* lay at anchor off the town.

Beside the ship I heard the dip of quickly plying oars;
I hailed the boat with joyous shout: was answered by the
rowers.
I saw them reach the *Dolphin's* side and rock upon the
tide—
The helmsman held a letter up as I looked down the side.

I saw my name and knew by whom the letter had been
penned.
A rain of bright delight I felt upon my soul descend,
Then broke the seal and read with joy, and as I read I woke.
I heard again the engine's throb and piston's steady stroke.

The Fleet is seen.

With merry heart I went on deck and paced me to and fro;
The ship was making steady way—about eight knots or so.
The ice had somewhat closed around, a way we had to force;
Some floes which lay athwart the bows most tortuous made
the course.

A mist upon the landward ice had all the morning lain;
But wind came with the afternoon and made it clear again.
At length we saw a fleet of ships about ten miles ahead—
Each one sent up a cloud of smoke and had her canvas
spread.

I ran aloft with telescope the ships and ice to view.
The ice was as it was with us, and they were urging through—
Were urging through with ev'ry sail and ev'ry pound of steam;
While all alive with countless seals the landward floes were seen.

Soon, like a steed spurred on in war, the trusty *Dolphin* sped
With quickened pulse and straining wings before the breeze outspread.
Three hundred men upon her deck in their excitement cheered
At every sheet of ice she pierced and every floe she cleared.

The Ship is laden and returns to St. John's.

A stronger wind came up astern and helped her on her way;
The wail of seals we plainly heard long ere the close of day.
That night, beneath the moon and stars a bloody scene was spread—
The seals lay piled upon the floes, full twenty thousand dead.

The noonday's virgin ice was stained—it reeked in crimson blood,
As some fair piece of daisied land beneath a battle's flood.
At break of day the blood-stained hands the murderous hunt renewed;
The sun went down on ships and men in blood alike imbued.

At eve next day but one, the ships were deeply laden all,
And Nature, moved to pity, dropped a widespread snowy pall.

The stars looked down on purity where bloody stains had been.
The snow was like forgetfulness which wraps a battle-scene.

The *Dolphin's* head to south was turned. Success had banished care.
A countless host of screaming gulls about us wheeled in air;
A north-east wind came up behind and piped a merry tune;
The laden ships, we all agreed, would drop their anchors soon.

Ice, Storm, and Shipwreck.

But on the silent treach'rous tide the frozen masses wheeled;
The route we had to travel south King Frost securely sealed;
Of no avail was steam or sail, and so we helpless lay;
Dark clouds that night hid all from sight, and flying snow next day.

The blinding drift without a rift hid e'en the masts from view—
I could not see the nearest man among the *Dolphin's* crew.
The wind, the ice, the driving snow seemed filled with vengeance all;
Dark woe was spread abroad o'erhead, and seemed about to fall.

The north-east gale beat like a flail and tighter made the floes—
With firmer grip they held each ship, while mass on mass uprose.
The laden hulls, like things in pain, began to groan and creak
As if to make full concert to the wild tornado's shriek.

Eight bells had scarcely struck when came faint cries of
dire distress—
A ship, we knew, had come to grief, but which we could
not guess.
The cries were like the cries of men who called from out
a tomb—
The snow so dense, the cold intense, and most intense the
gloom.

Then came a sound like boom of waves against a hollow
shore,
With crash of masts! We knew *that* ship would see the
land no more.
We blew the *Dolphin's* signal-horn, and heard the horns afar,
Subdued and almost lost like groans amid the storm of war.

Again that booming dismal sound came swelling through
the snows,
With crash of rending hull and deck and moaning of the
floes—
Then cries again of men in pain exposed to wind and cold.
By tongue of man such horrors can be never duly told!

It seemed a dream, an awful dream! to suit the troubled
breast
Of one whose crimes of former times forbade his spirit rest.
Men cried for help we could not give. To leave the ship
was death,
With blinded eyes, with frozen limbs, and snow-extinguished
breath.

By crash of deck the ship awreck we knew to windward lay,
And knew too well the friendly sounds we made were borne
away

As sea-bird's cry is made to die along a stormy strand
While ocean raves and throws its waves high on the humid sand.

Loud creaked the *Dolphin's* sturdy hull; the ice more firmly grasped:
She like an egg within the hand of giant firmly clasped.
We tried the pumps—four feet we found, the ship still leaking fast;
The bravest of the brave on board a moment stood aghast.

The storm was like this storm to-night, with added snow and sleet;
It almost drowned that dreadful sound, the pump's dull, steady beat.
We yearned for day, and prayed its ray would change or lull the gale:
Without a change no human hand could be of least avail!

The wind releases the Ship, and the St. John's Haven is reached.

The wind veered round, and veered again; fog hid the world from sight;
We drifted six succeeding days, and each succeeding night.
The storm was spent, the ice was rent, and scattered east and south;
To our surprise our wondering eyes beheld the harbour's mouth.

Full speed ahead!—on, on we sped with willing heart and hand,
Towards the cliffs and rugged rifts of fir-clad Newfoundland.
We inward passed with flags half-mast; our hearts both sad and sore
For widows who would weep for those on stormy Labrador.

Again the bells !—I heard them peal as plainly as I hear
The gusts which shake this inn to-night, and, Oh, so sweet and clear !
Bell after bell—each silver sound fell like a falling star :
Now pealed they near the trusty ship, and now they pealed afar.

The ringers had, I thought, gone mad—they rang so wildly well.
What joy to hear again those tones so sweetly ebb and swell !
I almost wept—a trembling crept through tingling nerve and brain
While fell the sounds as fast and clear as falls the summer rain.

Within my heart I said, "O, bells, ring on for evermore !
Ye waft my soul to her I love on Scotland's distant shore.
Ring on ! ye make me think I hear that voice so low and sweet ;
Ring on until the lips that love and lips belovèd meet ! "

I walked the deck, and, walking, dreamed. The laughing of the rills
I heard again 'neath summer sun amid the Sidlaw Hills.
Once more I thought she nestled close within my arm's repose
And said, " Oh ! tell of all befel amid the drifting floes."

Bright tears of joy were in my eyes to see that gentle face
So full of love, like God's above, so full of truth and grace—
To think I felt again the throb of that unsullied heart,
So like a babe's, that vowed for me to bear a woman's part.

The Ship enters Port, and he hears from Home.

Those thoughts of mine gave wings to time, for ere I wist we lay
With upfurled sails and anchor down within the quiet bay.
Though glad was I of rest in port and such success at sea,
More glad was I to smile and sigh o'er words from dear Dundee.

How day and night, *she* prayed for me, and wore about her neck
My pictured face to keep it warm "because 'twas cold on deck":
Had kissed the gifts which I had made, had kissed them o'er and o'er
When wind and waves had banished sleep along the Scottish shore.

Long, long replies and fond replies I sent to cheer her heart;
And said "Once home, I'll no more roam nor from my lassie part:
She'll no more weep and banish sleep with fret and fears for me
When nights are dreary, dark and long, and storms are out at sea."

(My tale is long—forgive me if my tale be also dull.)
The wind and ice had sadly strained the stalwart *Dolphin's* hull:
From last affray she wounded lay, and needed time to heal—
That fearful grip which wrecked the ship had strained her, deck and keel.

We hoisted out, with laugh and shout, the oily wealth below;
The tackle clicked as gaily tramped the sailors to and fro.
On deck and side, from rail to tide, the caulkers mallets rang—
From rise of sun to set of sun they toiled and joked and sang.

As, day by day, the trusty ship arose from out the sea
We saw her iron plates were wrenched, and some had broken free—
Good proof of contest most severe, that like a trusty knight
She did not quail, but rode in mail and won the deadly fight.

Though other ships put out to sea to hunt the seal again,
We had to lie reluctant by, and strive with might and main
To make the *Dolphin* fit to sail upon a farther flight—
To regions where a restless sun puts off approach of night!

As day by day we toiled the air grew warm and warmer still;
The melting snow made rivers flow down each surrounding hill;
The whitened town grew sombre brown: and here and there were seen,
Rejoicing in return of spring, the meadows growing green.

The Ship sails for Davis' Strait in pursuit of Whales.

We sailed at last; and long we watched, upon our larboard hand,
The stately cliffs along the coast of boist'rous Newfoundland—
We watched them fade, as fades a cloud, away to south and west.
The *Dolphin's* fins for months to come could know no more of rest.

For days we saw no living thing but feathered fedaries
And, here and there, a frightened seal which plunged beneath the seas.
Both wind and waters fell asleep in slumber calm and still—
A peace profound lay all around, and we dreamed not of ill.

Far in the north, when summer reigns and cloudless is the sky,
Like structures vast, with domes and spires, the bergs go floating by—
A mighty Venice drifting south with buildings spotless white,
On which a circling midnight sun sheds unremitting light.

At length, beneath this midnight sun the *Dolphin* made her way
'Mid silent bergs on silent seas lit by the restless ray.
Each crystal mass as in a glass beheld its form upset—
Each cliff and crag, each wall and dome and fretted minaret.

About each base the ocean's pulse in silence softly beat,
And laved and waved in frost-made cave and fissure's blue retreat
As waves and laves the rising tide along the sea-worn shores,
Or waters of a caverned rock are stirred by passing oars.

In search of whales we sailed for weeks, and marked success was ours;
The weeks went swiftly by like days, the days went by like hours.
That harpoon-points are tipped with death the struggling monsters found,
While day and night the crimson sun went circling round and round.

Success was such the *Dolphin's* stem was early southwards turned.
For Scotland's shore, for wife and friends, my spirit ached and yearned.
How glad was I to feel gone by the years that bade me roam!
In heart I joined the watch below that sang of "Home, sweet Home!"

We sailed along the Greenland coast, we sighted Cape Farewell.
One night occurred a strange event of which I'll briefly tell:
And though, perhaps, you'll not believe that such a thing could be,
Remember you are landsmen and know nothing of the sea.

A Mysterious Occurrence.

The night was bright; our hearts were light and all to mirth unstrung;
Our blithest tales were lightly told; our blithest songs were sung
To music at the *Dolphin's* bows where danced the briny foam.
What sailor's heart can be but gay whose ship is sailing home?

The bell had struck the midnight hour; the air was still as death,
And from the rising of the moon it had not blown a breath.
The look-out on the barricade called loudly aft, "I see
A light upon the starboard bow!" The light was plain to me.

So near the light, so bright the light and red the gleaming ray,
I gave command—"Full speed aback!"—to check the *Dolphin's* way:
Then blew the lusty signal-horn and waited for reply.
The ruddy light had disappeared! and much surprised was I.

Again the *Dolphin* went ahead—again appeared the light:
'Twas still upon the starboard bow, and just about as bright.
Again the ship was put aback and gave her blatant cry:
The light ahead again had fled, and silence gave reply.

Once more the *Dolphin* went ahead—once more appeared the light:
Once more upon the starboard bow and just about as bright.
Once more I said—"Full speed aback!"—once more the signal cry:
The ruddy light went out again and more surprised was I!

The sailors talked in softened tones that told of vague alarm;
They felt the light to be a sign of some approaching harm.
The watch below appeared on deck with wonder in their eyes,
And gave expression to the fears which they could not disguise.

Each mounted to the barricade, or stood along the rail,
And vainly hoped to catch a glimpse of some approaching sail;
While every eye intently gazed, where thrice the light had been
A phosphorescent glow was spread and blackness lay between.

A Phantom Wreck rises from the Deep and sinks again.

A tremor seized upon the frame, and silence on the lip
Of every conscious man on board of that unconscious ship.
At length a cry of terror broke, as from the lighted wave
A long-forgotten wreck arose from out her ocean grave :

And as she rose the glow increased and shed a lurid light
Which lit a circle of the sea and hid the orbs of night—
It shone upon the *Dolphin's* hull, on every yard and mast—
It fell upon the *Dolphin's* crew, who stood and gazed aghast.

Sea-worms had eaten through the sides and through the mouldered deck,
And we beheld the ghastly ribs of the uprising wreck ;
On plank and rib and rusty bolt the sombre seaweed hung;
And, dragged from out profoundest depths, uncouthest creatures clung.

Her masts were standing, still erect, and from her yards and ropes
The rotten canvas downwards streamed, like disappointed hopes.
'T was plain to us that when she sank she carried all her sail—
Destruction like a thunderbolt left none to tell the tale !

A sight more sad and grisly never, never swam the tide !
We heard the water trickling down and streaming from the side—
It poured a score of cataracts from off the fretted deck,
And for a time it hid from view what lay within the wreck.

Soon through the gaping planks and ribs, which now
appeared to flame,
The voices of a hundred men in cries of terror came;
And we beheld the drownèd men who must have been below
When came the unexpected squall which laid the vessel low!

The water pouring in again through every crack and rent,
The phantom ship (if such it was) began a slow descent;
The ghastly light within and round became as slowly
dimmed;
And though 't was calm we heard, as 't were, the shrieking
of the wind.

We watched the hull—we watched the masts, down-sinking,
fade away—
The tattered sails like clinging crape upon a rainy day.
The waters to a centre rolled as they had rolled before
Above the crew decreed by Fate to see the land no more—

Above the men who hoped and loved—above the men
who sleep,
With all their hopes and all their love, five thousand
fathoms deep.
Oh, times there are I envy them the squall that overbore!
Far better had it been if I had never seen the shore.

The moon and stars looked down again. The *Dolphin*
seemed asleep
And motionless—like all her crew—on an unruffled deep.
Spellbound were we, and not a hand or foot on board was
stirred.
Our minds were with the phantom filled; we uttered not
a word.

And thus for minutes we remained ere we the course pursued
With loss of all our merriment and half our fortitude.
It seemed that e'en the oaken ship of sadness bore a freight,
And felt the burdened hearts on board to be an over-weight.

The Ship goes on her way, and again he dreams.

For days beneath a leaden sky we sailed a quiet sea.
I felt the future had in store a sad surprise for me;
But what the grief, or why the grief, my heart could not divine:
I only knew the grief was there, and knew the grief was mine!

By day and night no rest I knew. I had a haunted mind;
I saw before my daunted eyes the horror left behind
Now rising slowly from the wave, now sinking slowly down!
My sailors' glance appeared askance, on every face a frown.

With knitted brow and muttered words I paced me to and fro;
I saw in every man on board a fast increasing foe;
I felt as though, like Cain of old, I had my brother slain
And all who saw beheld a brow that bore a bloody stain.

My sleeping hours were all consumed by visions dire and drear,
And I would wake with sudden start and call aloud in fear!
I thought the crew had mutinied, and on the quarter-deck
Declared my crimes had doomed them all and brought the phantom wreck.

Now round about they stood and gazed, and like to fiends
they seemed;
With parted lips and clenchèd teeth they bitterly blasphemed;
And now they rushed and bore me down, while winds and
billows roared,
And I was cast, as Jonah was, in terror overboard!

I thought I sank for days and weeks, but ne'er the bottom
found;
Mile after mile of water pierced, the depth lay still pro-
found!
While far above, a floating speck—as 't were a baby's boat
No bigger than a cockle shell—I saw the *Dolphin* float.

Down—down, and still for ever down!—the waters endless
seemed:
The daylight far above my head weak and uncertain
gleamed;
And yet remaining depths appalled, I saw them so pro-
found;
While monsters all unknown to man came swimming round
and round!

For years, it seemed to me, I sank! At length, beneath,
I saw
A sight which made me tremble, and which filled my soul
with awe.
I saw the wreck—the phantom ship, and all her ghastly
crew;
I heard again their terrored cries that pierced me through
and through!

Between her carious masts I passed, between her fretted sails,
And touched her deck amidships and midway 'twixt her rails,

Beneath her barricade there hung a tongueless brazen bell;
I saw the name that there was graved. *That name I dare not tell!*

When I the name had read I *woke!* and heard my boatswain call
The starboard watch to come on deck, because a sudden squall
Had swept across the *Dolphin's* course, and seemed about to sweep
The masts from out her trusty hull and her from off the deep.

The swish along her flying sides revealed she travelled fast.
I heard the tramp of seamen's feet—they ran to climb amast.
I heard the howling of the squall, the humming of the stays;
I felt a heavy lurch, and then I heard the falling sprays.

During a Storm a Man is lost Overboard, and the Captain sees strange Sights.

I rushed on deck and looked around; the wind was hot and fierce;
The gloom beyond the binnacle no human eye could pierce,
Save when a flash of lightning for an instant rent the pall—
Then from the topsail yard I saw a struggling seaman fall.

"Man overboard!" I cried, and put the *Dolphin's* head about.
In vain the throwing of the buoy, in vain the sailors' shout;
Vain all the efforts which we made in darkness so profound—
The darkness of a mine of coal a mile beneath the ground.

We searched and strove while hope remained, and after
hope had fled;
We searched and strove although we knew the missing one
was dead!
We lingered at the search because so sad at heart were we
For orphans and a widow who were waiting in Dundee.

All night, all day, all night again, the squalls, like living
things
Which hovered round and over us and beat us with their
wings,
Continued to imperil us and lash the angry waves—
The hungry waves, which hissed and surged, and gaped
like yawning graves!

The terrors which I suffered through those nights and
through that day
Imagination cannot paint, nor human tongue essay.
Through every hour of light and dark, by terrored vision
seen,
I saw the rowers, boats, and oars of that mysterious dream!

Behind the ship I saw the hand thrust upwards from the
sea,
And sailed we fast, or sailed we slow, the hand still followed
me!
'T was white by day—as white as snow; and, just as in my
dream,
All through the night 't was lustrous white and shed a
ghastly gleam!

The hand had for my fevered sight a strange attractiveness,
It burned within my fevered brain, and caused me such
distress

I fain would plunge me overboard, but power I could not find:
The hand was like the Pole, and ruled the compass of my mind.

Those awful sights! I see them now! They haunt me, and they must
Until my spirit takes its flight, my body goes to dust!
The dreams I dream, and facts I live are strangely interlaced:
The facts in dreams, the dreams in facts may all be plainly traced.

That storm, like all the storms of life, was born and lived and died:
The wave, its mother, sadly sobbed; the wind, its father, sighed.
Our lives themselves are but as waves by windy passions tossed:
The winds of passion die away, and then the lives are lost.

A seaman's memory is but brief (though mine, Alas! is long).
The storms of yesterday are lost in present sun and song.
Good reason had the *Dolphin's* crew to do as sailors do—
The sun would not be far to west ere Scotland rose to view.

Land is seen.

Six bells had struck—the metal scarce had time to still its tongue,
When "Land ahead!" was called aloud and with a lusty lung.
I felt a throbbing at my heart, the tears within my eyes,
As like a cloud from out the sea I saw the land uprise.

The bells again! those mystic bells I heard so oft before—
A madly merry peal they seemed on Scotland's rising shore.
I heard them, but the crew heard not their sweet and rapid chime:
They rang in rote with dulcet note, and rang in perfect time.

"Ring on!" I said within my heart; "ring on for evermore,
And waft my soul to her I love on yonder rising shore!
Ring on above the gentle breeze and gently swelling tide—
Ring sweetly on, and let me dream I linger by her side!

"Ring on till peace and joy once more my haunted spirit bless:
I 'll know them not until I feel the thrill of her caress!
Ring on! ye make me think I hear that voice so low and sweet!
Ring on! and let the lips that love the lips belovèd meet."

At cry of "Land!" the watch below came hurrying up on deck:
Forgotten were the storms and bergs, the sad mysterious wreck.
Assembled on the barricade the crew gave three times three,
And then one more—the loudest cheer—for bonny old Dundee.

The land we saw was Sutherland, and Caithness further east:
For hearts and eyes the shores of both spread one delightful feast.
At later day to starboard lay old Stroma all alight,
And Duncansby within an hour was fading out of sight.

A merry breeze from out the north made full the *Dolphin's* sails,
And laughing waves leaped lightly up to kiss her flying rails;
While every mile we left behind increased the sailors' mirth—
Forgetting e'en the dead, we sped Dornoch and Moray Firth.

As passed the night each coastal light a flash of welcome gave
To all but me. They made me see, arise from out her grave
The ghastly wreck, whose fretted deck I sank to in my dream;
Her brazen bell I saw too well by every friendly gleam!

The Ship reaches Dundee, and he hastens to his Home.

At noon next day the Firth of Tay lay dancing in the sun.
Oh! glad were we that sight to see, and glad the voyage was done.
No word of home for weary months spent on the rolling main
Makes e'en the sad feel madly glad at sight of home again.

A misty world of hopes and fears we felt around us spread!
We wondered who was still alive; we wondered who was dead.
By gusts of thought the world was swept as into port we passed.
Some friends, we knew, had said adieu and that adieu their last:

The wife so loved I longed to see, and passed with hasty feet
The ships, the docks, the busy quays and each familiar street.
I neither saw nor heard till I had pushed my door aside,
With thoughts of her surprise and joy — my own, my bonnie bride!

A footstep on the stair I heard; my heart more quickly beat.
The white-haired mother's form I saw; she softly came to greet,
And said, "My son, I 'm glad you 've come." "My wife," said I, "is she—
My bonnie belle, as sweet and well as when I left Dundee?"

"No pain or grief is hers," she said, "and she is just as sweet.
Come, let me take you to her side, be present when you meet."
The mother led me by the hand; we reached a blinded room—
Its stillness told a bitter tale, recalled my dream and doom!

Pale tapers' light revealed a sight true men but once can see—
A sight which froze my fevered blood and swept my joy from me!
The 'Pride of Tay' encoffined lay in her eternal rest;
A chaplet sweet lay at her feet! one hand lay on her breast!

And lustrous white that ice-like hand beneath the tapers' glow!
It clasped within a last embrace a babe as white as snow!

One piercing cry, and only one—and then I senseless fell;
But what that lonely cry to *me* no tongue can ever tell.

When passed the cortège through the street—when passed the 'Pride of Tay'
To sleep upon the green hill-side, 't was someone's wedding day.
I heard the pealing of the bells that once had pealed for me.
No wonder that I heard them ring when I was far at sea!

Within a month I trod again that sad familiar way
To lay beside my bonnie bride the dead whose hair was grey—
The form of her who took my hand, who softly came to greet
And, weeping, saw the lips that loved the lips belovèd meet.

Now like a sunken ship I lie within life's changeful sea;
Unheeded are its storms and calms—they 're all the same to me.
From out the deep of many griefs from time to time I rise
To tell the story of my loss to wondering ears and eyes—

As rose the hideous phantom wreck, with fretted side and sail,
And told how all unlooked-for and destructive was the gale
Which plunged her and her joyous men, in spite of human tears,
A full five thousand fathoms deep, with all their hopes and fears!

Part III.

What followed the Captain's Story.

"Oftentimes to win us to our harm,
The instruments of darkness tell us truths;
Win us with honest trifles to betray us
In deepest consequence."—Shakespeare, *Macbeth.*

The Host expresses thanks and asks a Question.

The story thus a termination found
And filled our minds with thoughts of wreck and storm.
The sailor sat as if in thought profound—
A living picture one might name "Forlorn."

The dreary storm that harassed all the night
Still moaned and groaned like man in deep distress,
Still piped and thundered round the weathered walls
Like fifes and drums the devil might possess.

And we could hear the distant breakers roar
As mighty waves leaped up and thundered in:
The blasts seemed louder, hoarser than before—
Our silence, doubtless, magnified the din.

For silence bound us when the speaker ceased,
We half expecting he had more to say.
More willing ears at festive board of old
Ne'er hearkened to a stirring minstrel-lay.

The host at length found words, and thus he spake:
"We thank you, captain, for the tale you've told;
But why conceal the name upon the bell?
In asking this, pray do not think me bold."

"The name I saw upon the phantom bell
For reasons of my own I must conceal:
The secret is the measure of my life;
So urge me not the secret to reveal."

Again we piled more wood upon the hearth,
More broken pieces from the mouldering wreck.
"That wood," the sailor said, "is Norway pine,
And evidently portions of a deck."

And leaning forth again he spread his hands
To shade his eyes a little from the light,
While we sat wondering if the tale were true,
Told by this puzzling pilgrim of the night.

Who was the man? and whence could he have come
At stroke of midnight, through the wind and rain?
We both refrained from asking, though we knew
Our mental musing must be all in vain.

The Captain induces the Host to tell a strange Story.

"Host!" said the sailor, "tell to me the tale
Which hangs upon the fuel of your fire.
'T is plain a ship has yielded up her life.
Did she in peace or war of storm expire?"

"That 's more than I can tell, or any man.
Let me explain," replied the kindly host.
"The time and cause of loss are both unknown—
One of the mysteries of the Cornish coast.

"A year and thirteen days ago, a fearful gale
Blew fiercely from the west—as 't blows to-night.
The fishers said no ship could carry sail
Between the sundown and the morning light.

"Of that, I 'm not a judge ; but this I know,
From here to Orkney Islands wrecks were piled,
And though I came here fifty years ago
I can't recall a tempest half as wild.

"Folk travelled miles and miles to see the seas
That beat for days against the Cornish shore :
And some who dwelt in Truro, I believe,
Said that at night they heard the ocean roar.

A Strange Old Barque.

"The gale had done its worst the second day,
And shifted to the west to try its hand ;
And then it was we saw, just off the bay,
A ship dismasted, drifting t'wards the land.

"So deep was she a soggy log she seemed,
Just light enough to keep itself a-swim ;
While now to starboard, now to port she leaned
And, plunging wildly, travelled slowly in.

"Sometimes the seas completely hid the whole,
Sometimes the stem or stern showed like a rock ;
At last we saw her on the breakers strike
With a tremendous and a deadly shock.

"When she had struck she never stirred again,
But quiet lay, by waves, like lions, torn—
Lions with rocks for teeth to break her bones,
Whose gnash and growl were by the winds inborne.

"Like to a carcase through the day she lay ;
The moon at night revealed the lions' grin.
The coastguard said 't was just at break of day
They tore their oaken victim limb from limb.

"She came to shore in fragments large and small,
Which for a quarter mile I saw outspread,
Like broken bones, along the eastern beach—
Between the outer and the inner head.

"The stem and thirty feet of deck together came—
Unsundered to the beach's inner end;
And when I saw the oak and copper bolts
I wondered how the force of waves could rend.

"The windlass still was clinging to the deck
With fragment of a chain about it wound;
And nearly all the barricade remained—
The after beam, with bell attached, was sound.

"But signs there were elsewhere, the fishers said,
The wood had been sometime beneath the sea;
Yet how the ship could sink and rise again
Is quite beyond a landsman like to me—

"Unless when sunken she was filled with salt.
In such a case she might go down amain,
And when the salt had melted in the hold
Rise, like your phantom ship, to light again.

The Windlass and the Bell.

"The windlass lies half buried in the sand,
Some twenty feet above high-water mark.
The children play about it in the day,
But no one ventures near it after dark.

"The fishers say (and they believe it, too),
That stormy nights they hear the windlass click
And sailors sing as they an anchor weigh—
They always hear this when the fog is thick.

"The bell was taken from the barricade
And on the village school was made to hang.
It calls the urchins to their daily task—
At nine and two o'clock I hear it clang.

"And, strange to say, the children all declare
The bell has some connection with a soul;
That when the ghostly sailors on the beach
Are heaving anchor, they can hear it toll.

"I don't know why, but I have kept the wood
A year eleven days in my inn yard,
But never burnt a billet till to-night,
And shouldn't now but that it blew so hard

"It brought to mind the wreck; and then I said,
'Though true about the windless and the bell,
I'll make a fire from the old ship's bones':
And I must say they burn exceeding well.

"The strangest feature of my tale is this—
The shipping people tried and tried again
To find the port from which the ship had sailed:
No missing ship they found that bore the name.'

Silence is kept for a space.

While talked the host, the sailor silent sat
Watching the antics of the yellow blaze,
As if he mused on something far away—
Some hidden secret of his by-gone days.

He seemed to me to be more snowy white
Than when he came abruptly to the inn;
And there was something in his blue eyes' light
Which made me feel somewhat afraid of him.

Afraid, because so like a spectre he,
And yet more man-like than the most of men—
A sort of walking human mystery
Enshrining something passing human ken.

I think the host to silence had relapsed
A full two minutes, or perhaps e'en three,
Before a muscle of the sailor moved:
He seemed of self a lifeless effigy.

The Captain asks a Question and makes a Revelation.

At length he said, with gaze fixed on the host,
And hands that clenched the chair on which he sat,
"Friend, you have told me all about the ship,
Except the name she bore. *Pray what was that?*"

The host, surprised, returned the sailor's gaze,
And feared, apparently, the name to tell;
But after briefest thought he slowly said,
"The *Destiny*; 't is graven on the bell."

A tremor passed throughout the sailor's frame,
A startled look came o'er his ashen face;
Then rising quickly from his seat he walked,
With knitted brows, the floor with rapid pace.

He heeded not the lightning's vivid flash,
And deaf appeared as noisy thunders pealed.
The startled look and tremor of his frame
The hidden name most clearly had revealed.

The host and I assurèd were that we
The cherished secret of the man could tell—
The name that hung above the village school
He in his dream saw on the phantom bell.

PART IV.

The Shipwreck.

"Farewell, brother!—we split, we split, we split!"
SHAKESPEARE, *The Tempest.*

A Distress Signal is heard, and Dawn breaks.

WHILE to and fro the sailor quickly passed,
Our ears were startled by the distant boom
Of signal gun, faint, but distinctly heard
Just when the dawn's first glimmer lit the room.

A cold, grey dawn it was, which looked as if
The thunder's peal had pallid made its cheek,
And rain had washed all colour from its robes—
An ashen, eastern, far-extended streak.

Again the gun's faint boom! a ship we knew
Was in distress upon the rocky shore.
The pacing sailor paused with look intent
And, with us, listened for the gun once more.

We did not listen long; the pausing storm
More clearly made it sound. It seemed to be
A groan, as if the dying ship saw death
About to strike her from amid the sea.

We left the inn, all three, and faced the storm,
The rugged cliffs' most seaward edge to climb;
And, standing on a lofty precipice,
Looked down and out upon a scene sublime.

The Scene from the Cliffs.

West, north, and east stretched out the angry sea
In wild commotion, clad in driving spray,
The billows racing like white steeds to land
From Illogan to Padstow's narrow bay.

We seemed to stand on crumbling battlements
That crowned the crest of some old castle's walls,
At base of which a countless host laid siege,
While upwards rolled their mingled battle-calls.

Wave after wave rolled in and upwards shot
As if it willed old Ocean to undam;
The cliffs vibrating from the sturdy blows
Dealt by the deep sea's swinging batt'ring-ram.

Things distant, yet, were but in outline seen,
But growing day made clear and clearer still
The fashion of the struggling ship whose gun
Had boomed and brought us to the storm-torn hill.

A steamship helpless, having broken down,
Her slender canvas, shattered in the gale,
Fluttered like garments on her useless yards;
And, 'thwart the sea, she plunged her leeward rail.

So low she lay we thought her water-logged,
And from some troughs so sluggishly upbore
We deemed her doomed to sink ere she should reach
The rock-toothed lions waiting near the shore.

Still on she came with tardy roll and plunge,
While billows smote and leaped and overran—
As some vast herd of cattle in stampede
Smite and sweep o'er a prostrate, helpless man.

At last she struck where struck the *Destiny*.
We saw her tossed as by an angry steer,
While to her rigging clung her battered crew
'Mid bitter desolation steeped in fear.

Along the beach we saw the fishers grouped
Between the inner and the outer head.
Their active inactivity revealed
That hope of rescue in their minds was dead.

The Captain says Farewell.

The sailor-guest bade us a warm adieu
And beachwards went, along a rugged track.
Chilled to the bone, and wet as swimming dogs,
The host and I determined to go back.

Nor skill nor power had we to render aid
To those who clung so madly to a rope.
Like other men, when merely lookers on,
We kept alive the tender flame of hope.

What wonderful attractiveness has man
When standing face to face with cruel death!
Wise stand with fools, and best with even worst,
(The knave suppressed) to breathe a humane breath.

As particles of steel are helpless drawn
The loadstone by a mystic law to seek,
The fascination of the doomèd ship
Drew us again to climb the stormy peak.

Some signs there were the gale was nearly spent.
The sun had reached and passed the mark of noon,
And through the parts less dense of scudding clouds
Its face shone forth as 't were a shrunken moon.

A driving mist had spread a ragged veil,
And all to seawards lay concealed behind.
What of the ship? Had she to pieces gone?
The dark uncertainty vexed sore the mind.

We saw commotion on the distant beach—
Fishers excited running to and fro;
But what had happened we could not divine,
So to the scene determined we would go.

Not without danger was the windy way.
With cautious step the downward path we took.
The storm had broken down the valley bridge—
With peril crossed we through the maddened brook.

The village streets deserted were by all—
Swept by the volleys of the wind and rain;
And wives and children gazed with frightened face
Behind the shelter of the rattling pane.

We hastened through, thence o'er the inner head,
And reached at last the wave-tormented shore,
Where shouting men and frantic waters made
A wildest concert with the gale's hoarse roar.

A sight we saw which made our hearts to throb,
And for a moment stopped our very breath—
The centre of a group of fisher folk,
Before us lay the midnight guest in death.

A darker revelation yet awaited us—
The ship and all her crew were of the past.
It seemed a dream like to the captain's own,
While dark reality smote us aghast.

The story of the drowning of the crew,
And how the hoary sailor met his end,
We listened to with more than wonderment,
As told us by a simple fisher friend.

Part V.

The Fisherman's Story.

"From the first corse till he that died to-day,
This must be so.
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart?"

SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet.*

The Manning of the "Petrel."

'Twas nine o'clock. My mates and I were gathered on the beach
Determined that in spite of storm we'd try the wreck to reach.
The stoutest and the strongest boat along the shore was mine;
My mates and I made eight of crew, a stranger made the nine.

The stranger came at early morn: from whence we do not know.
He watched the wreck, and smote his hands, and paced him to and fro,
But spake to none and none to him; the folk declared him mad,
But I believe he knew the ship, and was exceeding sad.

'T was on the windlass, all alone, that I observed him first;
And some declare, who saw him there, he gnashed his teeth and cursed:
Of course they only fancied that. If fog had come in thick
They would, no doubt, have all declared they heard the windlass click.

At first, my mates and I supposed the best thing we could do
Would be to man the *Petrel* with a sturdy double crew.
We thought the needed men would join without a second word.
Though duty called, the storm appalled—their minds and hearts were surd.

For once the hearts of Cornishmen were fitting hearts for slaves—
They wore the shackles of a fear to face the Cornish waves.
My mates and I then begged for one to take our vacant oar;
But, as concerned the village-folk, in vain did we implore.

There 's something in this circumstance I cannot understand—
A rescue boat put out to sea and did so under-manned!
Did secret spell—I cannot tell—unnerve the Cornish arm?
My mates and I—I will not lie—all felt a vague alarm.

We called aloud among the crowd, "*One* man to volunteer!"
But some refused because 't was "vain," and some refused from fear.
Our men were never known before to fail to aid distress.
The stranger, to the word "Will you?" returned a ready "Yes!"

He 's silent now, and low he lies upon the shingle there.
A better oarsman never rowed, though white as foam his hair.
Perhaps the men who answered "No" were wiser men than we:
If to our neighbours we were fools, we cowards couldn't be.

The "Petrel" is Launched.

The eastern side of Inner Head is somewhat worn away:
'T was there with neighbours' help we launched. It forms
a shallow bay;
And seas just thereabout appeared a bit less wild, we thought:
But launching anywhere to-day must be with danger fraught.

While neighbours cheered we dashed around the point and
pulled our best,
And long I feared we should but prove ourselves the
tempest's jest;
For more than once, aye, fifty times, my mates and I held
breath
When broken billows, sweeping shorewards, threatened us
with death.

It seemed to me a miracle we got beyond the sands!
The task appeared to be too great for human hearts and
hands—
But get we did! and, as the crests the *Petrel* upwards bore,
Ahead we saw the breaking wreck, *astern* the crowded shore.

We knew our friends were shouting words of cheer to urge
us on;
And though their words to us were lost they made our
muscles strong.
Our women, hearing we had gone, soon scaled the windy
head;
We felt, although we could not see, the anxious tears they
shed.

We strove and fixed our minds upon the souls on board
the ship,
The terrored heart, the moistened eye, the parched and
trembling lip.

I steered, and cheered as best I could the rowers' noble toil,
Forgetting not the perils of the hissing water-coil.

The stranger at his oar appeared to have the strength of ten
And to impart by subtle art his strength to other men.
Our wills became a part of his, and near the wreck we drew.
The Cornish cliffs had never seen a more determined crew!

A quarter mile or little more the breakers windward lay—
The *Petrel's* men were full of hope that this would be the day
Of which, throughout the rest of life, 't would be our modest boast
We added to the glory of our native Cornish coast.

Increasing hope increased the strength of every oarsman's arm,
As in the wreck's forerigging we beheld the sailors swarm.
Two score and ten of fellow men! Ah, what a sight to see!
Though twenty tempests blew we felt we 'd try to set them free!

Each minute seemed as long as life! we saw the ship was strained—
We saw her deck amidships gaped. We saw the billows gained
A mast'ry more and more complete—were rending her in two:
While on the wind was borne to us the shrieking of her crew.

We plainly saw to rescue all was more than man could do;
That we could take with us to land comparatively few.
We feared that ere the *Petrel* came a second time from shore
The wreck, and those who clung to her, would surely be no more.

The Storm drives the "Petrel" backwards, and the Wreck breaks asunder.

Then came the sorest trial which we yet had undergone.
Though strong we were, the awful storm was stronger than the strong.
It drove us back; and when again we near and nearer drew,
Alas! the wreck asunder broke and lost were all her crew.

The after half sank like as lead; the foreship seemed to leap;
The masts and yards went crashing down within the seething deep.
Two score and ten of drownèd men among the breakers lie!
'T was sad so many fellow-men could only see them die!

One wail most weird a moment rent and filled the maddened air—
The falling sailors' final cry of horrible despair
As down they plunged from life to death. 'T was like the wildest dream!
Both masts and men were swept away like straws adown a stream.

Long, long indeed my life will be if I forget that sight!
'T will be before my eyes by day and haunt my dreams by night!
Forever in my ears will ring, no matter where I go,
That bitter, last expression of the sailors' dying woe!

What human tongue can ever tell—what human mind conceive—
What mortal man can realize—what human soul receive
The force and measure of the thoughts that pierced them like a thorn,
That 'whelmed them like an angry sea, and swept them like a storm?

We hoped (a blessed thing is hope!) that havoc one would spare—
Some wave in mercy sweep a soul from death and dark despair—
Some swimmer with a madman's strength the roaring breakers cheat:
But hope was vain; the work of death could not be more complete.

We windwards kept the *Petrel's* head and near the breakers crept;
We closely searched the noisy foam that swiftly past us swept,
And waited long to see a hand or hear a struggler's cry:
In vain we strained the aching ear—in vain we strained the eye.

The Captain alarms the Fishermen.

Then looked I on the stranger's face. It wore the hue of death!
His hands were to his forehead clasped; he breathed with terror's breath,
And looked like men of whom I've read, who to the gallows go—
Who hear the knocking hand of death and turn as pale as snow.

A spectral light illumed his eyes—each glittered like a star.
He sat as one who thinks he hears expected sounds afar,
With fears that spring from out his doubt, and not from out his dread—
Like one who dreams of converse with the spirits of the dead.

I knew not what to do or say—a spell was on me cast!
At such a time I dared do nought a single hand to gast,
Lest all the *Petrel's* quailing crew should sink in seamen's graves
And have for sexton and for priest the angry winds and waves.

Then rose he in the *Petrel's* bow and faced the wind and sea;
And, stretching forth his hands like some devoutest devotee,
He spake as though a hearer stood within the mist and storm,
And with the voice of one who felt dejected and forlorn—

And said "Ring on, ring on, O bells! Ring on for evermore!
Ye waft my soul to her I love on Death's eternal shore.
Ring on, then, bells above the storm, above the surging tide—
Ring sweetly on and let me dream I linger by her side!"

"My mates" I cried "*the man is mad!* About and pull for land!
There may be wailing yet to-day along our village strand.
We've duty done and lingered long; we'll linger now no more!
We have to think of waiting wives and babes upon the shore."

The Boat is turned about and sails Homewards, but upsets.

It needed all our Cornish skill to put the boat about,
And not a man was there on board but held his breath throughout;

But like her namesakes on the wing the *Petrel* wheeled and
fled
And quickly left behind the wreck, the breakers and the
dead.

Before the whistling wind she ran, and leaped from wave to
wave.
The madman still, with outstretched hands, went on of
bells to rave.
As on the climbing crests we rode, we glimpses got of home,
And waiting friends along the beach beyond the belt of
foam.

Oh! glad were we, as nearer home and nearer still we fled,
To see our waiting wives and babes look out from Inner
Head.
A sailor feels a wild delight no landsman understands
When wives and children weep for joy, and wave aloft
their hands.

I felt a throbbing in my heart, a fulness in my throat,
As closely round the welcome head insped the nimble boat.
I felt uprise within my eyes a full heart's blinding tears!
Perhaps the joy we felt dismissed too soon our cautious
fears.

I do not know, I dimly saw, because my eyes were wet.
I'm conscious that we downwards plunged, and then
the boat upset.
I heard the shriek of wife and child as in the whirl I sank;
A flash of greenish light I saw, and then awhile, a blank.

Then—then I felt I upwards fought and to the surface came.
For life I strove, and hope inspired each fibre of my frame!
I felt a lion's strength within—a lion's will impel:
When man is fighting for his life he fights exceeding well.

It seemed to me I ceased to think and had but will to act,
While round the waters hissed and roared as 'neath a cataract.
For minutes but confusion reigned—and then a voice!—a hand!—
A blow!—a gasp!—a consciousness that I had reached the land!

I felt I leaned on friendly arms; I felt a wife's embrace;
I saw a pallid look and tears upon a childish face;
Then shouts—then cheers and loud "Thank God!" before I senseless fell.
In saying what remains to say I tell what others tell.

The fishers feared misfortune might the *Petrel* overtake.
Presentiment, provision for misfortune made them make—
And hence the ready word and hand, the ready buoy and rope
Which dragged us from the cauldron's depths when peril shattered hope.

The madman rose beside the boat and grasped the larboard rail;
And all that man could do for him was done without avail:
He neither seemed to see nor hear as to the wood he clung—
The people say by unseen hand the village bell was rung.

The billows swept both man and boat towards the open strand—
That portion where the windlass lies half buried in the sand.
The folk could only wait and watch till both were inwards cast,
Then follow the receding wave and bravely hold them fast.

'Twas thus they did. A score and ten the man and *Petrel* grasped
And bore them high, with cheers that hurled defiance at the blast.
Ah! sadly is the *Petrel* wrecked—and sadly wrecked is he!
God rest the spirit of the man and give His peace to me!

If what the folk declare is true about the windlass there,
The man was something more than mad, from something more than care.
'T is said that from the boat's upset, the while he died or drowned,
The windlass in its sandy bed kept turning round and round.

I cannot say that I believe in all the neighbours say,
For fancy on a day like this can lead the best astray;
And folk do say that fisher-folk are much by fancy led,
Believing that all living men are biassed by the dead.

He indulges in a little Fisher Philosophy.

On this I no opinion have; but life, it seems to me,
Is like the sailing of a ship upon a changeful sea—
A troubled sea that's all unknown and overspread with haze
Which hides the rocks and shoals, and mocks the navigator's gaze:

Where tides are running east and west, and north and south as well,
And where the more a man has seen the less a man can tell.
Life's sea has got its lucky boats, and boats unlucky too.
A lucky boat in safety sails with an unlucky crew.

And *contrary*—unlucky boats may pass from hand to hand,
Misfortune still their sails will fill and at their tillers stand.
They may be sold, and sold again, to dodge the devil's claw;
But what the newest owner sees is what the oldest saw.

A man is but a boat at sea, and out of sight of shore,
Where sun and stars are overcast and shall be evermore—
A boat without a binnacle; that compass never had;
That tries to sail a merry sea, but finds the sea is sad.

And such a man, it seems to me, that sailor must have been.
I've knocked about the world a bit, but never yet have seen
A madder man or saner man. No wonder fishers found
The windlass of the *Destiny* was turning round and round.

Part VI.

The Passing of the Storm.

"The weary sun hath made a golden set,
And by the bright track of his fiery car,
Gives token of a goodly day to-morrow."
SHAKESPEARE, *Richard III.*

The Author watches the coming of Calm and Sunshine.

The host and I, returning to the inn,
Mused all the way upon the fisher's tale;
And when again we reached the welcome door
To end had come the fury of the gale.

'T was with the weather as with angry man,
Who gentler seems than ever when is o'er
The passion-storm that stirred his deep of soul
And tossed the billows on his mental shore.

The gale was spent from length and speed of race;
With slackened speed it breathed a panting breath,
And like the white-haired pilgrim of the night
Was prostrate soon beneath the calm of death.

Forth like a shining warrior came the sun
And whirled a circle with his golden sword;
He through the breach, as through an open gate,
The lances of his glittering phalanx poured.

Then right and left the phalanx cut its way
And drove the cloudy masses into flight;

I heard the thunder of their rolling cars,
And watched as heated axles flashed the light.

Towards the leaden east they beat retreat,
And in the Devon valleys poured their grief;
While Cornish children clapped their joyful hands
And thanked the warrior for the glad relief.

The sneaking fog its allies followed soon,
And into slow detaching columns broke
In pallid silence on the dying wind,
Retreating slowly, like a battle's smoke.

Like an elastic mirror rolled the sea
And flashed meanwhile as flashes azure silk,
Save where the breakers broke it into surf—
A boiling cauldron of the whitest milk.

The fishers loosed their many-tinted sails—
The coloured pinions of their fishing craft
That turned their heads towards the wind and sun
And made obeisance, curtseying fore and aft.

The victor-sun in glory trod the west,
The centre of his lustrous spears his shield;
The shining portals of his place of rest
Revealed the blood-stains of the battlefield.

He kissed in pity the forsaken wreck—
In transient glory clothed her shattered form,
(As friends will place sweet flowers upon the dead),
A compensation for the gloomy storm.

Then dipped his shield behind the western sea,
Where I, like awed Parsee, beheld it fall.
The twilight angel from the throne of God
Stretched out his hands and spread his purple pall.

The evening star shone like a jewelled pin,
And seemed to keep the purple pall in place,
While vocal waves, lamenting, thundered in.
I thought of Christ with tears upon His face.

The Author muses and slumbers.

I, musing, wandered to the lofty cliff
From whence we viewed the wreck at break of day,
To read the thesis in philosophy
Spread on the pages of the scene and day.

And there I made a seat upon the moss
Like cap of velvet on an agèd head,
While thought, on rapid pinion, circled round
The storm, the calm, the living and the dead.

I mused as muses each, except the fool,
Of all the millions of perplexed mankind.
The darkness stretches ever on before,
The brilliant light of knowledge lies behind.

I mused of time and all its mysteries,
Of life and death and all that they have done.
My mind took flight and reached its starting point—
A circling wanderer, like the midnight sun.

The Pole-star quivered in the deep of space,
And seemed an eye which gazed from depth profound
With merry twinkle at the thought of man
Who seeks to find what never can be found.

The constellations, like a mighty wheel,
In constant revolution turned about;
Their twinkling barks sail circles in a sea
Of mysteries on mysteries throughout.

And thus humanity—a drifting ship—
Floats round the Pole-star of the Great Unknown;
And all on board muse on the rock of death,
Where fretful life is broken into foam.

While time permits us to remain at sea—
While on the voyage should mortals laugh or cry?
O! let us laugh, and let us merry live
In light of wisdom, till the day we die.

While thus I mused, I watched the rounded moon
Uplaunch her silver galley on the blue:
Like human hope she seemed, that comes to go,
And loses life in order to renew.

The chill had passed completely from the night,
And warmth with sleep so softly round me crept,
I sank unconscious on the velvet cap
Upon the agèd head—and soundly slept.

The Author dreams.

You will not wonder that I dreamed a dream
Of things which waking men can never see—
A dream in which the objects which I saw
In strange confusion danced a wild boree.

A world-wide maelstrom wheeled all round about,
Of everything beneath the circling sky—
Of everything that is or ever was—
Of things that lived and died—that live to die.

The rock and I the centre were of all—
A sort of axle of the whirling whole;
But turning roundabout the other way
I seemed to climb a whirling caracole.

Then like a flash the drownèd man appeared
As yesternight I saw him in the inn;
And, instantly, the rock on which I sat,
And all the mighty maelstrom ceased to spin!

The strange mutation seemed a stunning blow—
All life and thought of earth, it seemed, had fled,
And I was with the mariner alone
Within the sombre regions of the dead.

He on my shoulders laid his heavy hands,
Then fixed the glitter of his starry eye,
And said, like one who feels his soul relieved,
"The name upon the bell was *Destiny!*"

The Host awakens him.

Then I was roughly shaken; and a voice
Cried loudly in my ear, "Awake! awake!"
At first it seemed a portion of my dream,
But soon I knew it was the host who spake.

"I thought," said he, "that I should find you here,
And half expected you would be asleep:
And well I came, or sleeping restlessness
Had plunged you over to the briny deep.

"When I observed 't was nearly middle night,
And strange events so long had banished rest,
It seemed to me if you were not asleep
Some harm to you was plainly manifest."

We paused to look a moment at the wreck,
Ere to the inn we took the rugged way:
The broken hull stood like a phantom rock
That upwards rose to mark the fatal day.

Part VII.

Conclusion.

"Hath this fellow no feeling of his business, that he sings at grave-making?"—Shakespeare, *Hamlet.*

Morning.

The morning came the tempest's trail impatient to elute;
The merry birds assistance gave—played each his fife or flute.
The vault celestial's glorious blue from taint of cloud was free;
The outspread wings of brooding peace were over land and sea.

A balminess the darkened hours had brought from out the south.
Each breaker doffed its cap of white and shut its blatant mouth;
In gilded galley sailed the sun the fair cerulean main
With kingly state, and subject wind to act as chamberlain.

The agèd fishers told again their oft-repeated tales,
And watched the skiffs with flashing oars that dipped to aid the sails.
Both man and beast beheld, rejoiced, and sipped the cup of joy;
The sea-mew's wail its sadness lost and seemed a glad "Ahoy!"

The terrored ships that fled the storm, as chicks the falcon flee,
Put out again with spreading sails and drifted lazily.

One raised her signal-flags aloft to hail a passing mate—
The colours seemed like laughter heard behind a churchyard gate.

Alack, that ships and men alike are doomed to pass away!
Like spots upon the sailing sun the wreck and victim lay—
The wreck upon the sunken reef, the corpse upon a bier
Without a friend to say "Alas!" or shed a sorrow's tear.

Departure.

Four aged wheels, four aged steeds, one aged brazen horn.
The face of him who drove was like the sun at early morn;
And that of him who blew the brass was like the sun at eve,
As in the coach's crowded space he tried one more to steve.

'T was quickly done. Then off we sped, and through the village passed;
The brilliant-buttoned trumpeter blew forth his loudest blast.
The valleys' echoes gave replies from every deep recess,
And wayside urchins called aloud in mocking playfulness.

The coach moved slowly up the road that overlooks the glade.
Behind a hedge the sexton toiled and struck the grating spade,
And as he toiled he gaily sang, as spinster at her wheel.
A sexton has the time to think without the heart to feel.

A score of hearts, a score of tongues, to every pair a mind;
But not a tender word heard I of sorrows left behind!
The crest was reached, the whip was cracked, the horses gaily sped—
What cares the world for stranger-wrecks or for the stranger-dead?

THE ARMADA CALLED "INVINCIBLE"

"Cease to consult ; the time for action calls :
War, horrid war, approaches to your walls."
HOMER, *The Iliad.*

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

On the afternoon of the 19th of July, 1588, a match at bowls was being played on the Hoe at Plymouth by a number of English mariners whose equals have never been before or since assembled, when the captain of a small armed vessel suddenly announced the approach of the Armada called "Invincible." The English fleet sailed that night, and fell in with the Spaniards on the following day, when a running battle, lasting a week, ensued. On the 27th the Armada found shelter in Calais Roads. On the night of the 29th the English drove them to sea by means of fire-ships, and the terrible struggle was renewed. After a brave effort the Spanish Admiral, despairing of success, fled northwards with a south wind, in the hope of making his way around the coast of Scotland and thus escaping. Of the one hundred and twenty-nine vessels which quitted Spain in unprecedented pageantry and pride, a wretched and shattered remnant of fifty-three returned. From this blow the power of Spain never fully recovered.

The Captains on the Hoe.

A GROUP of Captains played at bowls
On breezy Plymouth Hoe ;
A band were they of fearless souls,
Whose vessels lay below
Awaiting the "Invincible"—
The fleet of haughty Spain—
Prepared to fight for principle
And not to fight in vain.

He who was wise to disobey *
The Queen's unwise command—
Who stood prepared in danger's day
To save his native land:
And Drake, of Englishmen the first
To sail around the world,
Whom Spaniards in their terror cursed,
Whose sails were rarely furled—
Who stormy Biscay boldly sailed,
And into Cadiz steered;
Where, while the Spanish sailor quailed,
He "singed the Spanish beard."
John Hawkins, rough and hardy
As his native Devon's oak,
Whose ship was never tardy
In a storm or battle-smoke:
Martin Frobisher, undaunted,
Who the English colours bore
To the misty regions haunted
By the ice of Labrador—
With many more of kindred fame
Where lines of battle ran,
Each one a fighting mariner,
A Sea-Dog Englishman.

With ringing laugh and sailor jest
They whiled the summer day,
With all the lively interest
Of boys at school and play.
The blood and nerves of heroes lay
Beneath the skins of tan,
And at the dawn of peril-day
Uprose leviathan!

* Howard of Effingham—commander.

Though feeble be the writer's pen,
The tale is one to shew
How half the world depended on
The men on Plymouth Hoe.

Arrival of Fleming.

A cry was raised, "A ship! A ship
Comes sailing in from sea!"
It quickly passed from lip to lip,
With "Who, and what is she?"
'T was plain to all that urgent haste
Propelled her on her way,
'T was plain she had no time to waste
Outside the breezy bay.

With all her straining canvas set
She sped towards the town:
With decks and crew all spray be-wet
She dropped her anchor down.
In haste was launched her captain's boat
And rowed towards the shore:
Each oarsman doffed his wetted coat
For freedom at the oar.
With rapid dip they fled the ship,
And sped towards the land—
As those who in a race outstrip,
Or flee with contraband.
The stalwart steersman leaped the prore
And hastened to the Hoe:
Excited was the look he wore,
His eyes were all aglow
As his who to the rescue runs
Amid a bloody strife;

Or who pursuing vengeance shuns
And flees to save his life.
He hurried up the steep ascent
Towards the peaceful scene
Which overlooked the armament—
The sailors' bowling green.

His sailor cap with grace he raised
And courtly was his bow:
The bowlers paused and silent gazed
Each one with knitted brow.
"I crave your pardon, gentle sirs"—
'T was thus the sailor spake—
"The news I bring, the blood bestirs!"
"What is it?" queried Drake—
"What is it?" said they, drawing near,
"And who and what are you?"
"I 'm Fleming, Scottish privateer,
And have a fighting crew.
Both they and I have never feared
The face of mortal man,
Although to-day in haste we steered
And into Plymouth ran.
My men and I, at break of day,
The Lizard Point could see;
Our ship was passing Falmouth Bay
Some twenty miles to lee.
We saw to south and west of us
What caused us much surprise,
A fleet so great, 't was fabulous!
We scarce believed our eyes!
The morning mists in part concealed
The host, though wondrous near—

A clearer morn the fate had sealed
Of my light privateer.
Not altogether unobserved
Did we to Plymouth haste—
One lofty galleon t'wards us swerved,
And for a time she chased.
My gentle sirs, dismiss your doubts!
That mighty morning host
With arrogance your courage flouts
Along the Cornish coast.
The King of Spain's Armada knocks
This day at England's door!
Yield once to him the thing he mocks,
You yield it evermore!"

The captains and onlookers gave
A loud and lusty cheer;
They drew each man his shining glave:
So did the privateer.
Oh! brightly in the sun they flashed,
Those blades of proven steel,
And like to silver bells they clashed
A soft but martial peal.
In dauntless hands they upwards shot
In solemn vow to God—
(Tread lightly that historic spot
And deem it holy sod)—
A vow to die, if die they must,
On points of Spanish steel
Ere they would yield to Spanish lust,
Or to the Spaniard kneel.
The blades in sheathing rang again
In witness to the word

Which echoed in each citizen
And God Almighty heard.

The gallant Howard grasped the hand
Of him who brought the news,
And said, "A boon of me demand,
And I shall not refuse."
"I beg that I may with you sail
And, when we meet the foe,
Of what the tyrants give avail—
A chance to strike a blow
At him who strikes at liberty,
To whom appeal is vain,
The pontiff's royal devotee—
The King of mighty Spain.
The perils which your England smite,
Smite at my Scotland too!
So Fleming with delight will fight
And so will all his crew.
We shall not fight as Englishmen,
But we will fight as well;
I doubt not all who hear me ken—
Now let me say 'Farewell.'"
With ease he raised his cap again,
And bowed with manly grace:
His errand done, content and fain
Were stamped upon his face.
"Farewell!" again said he: and they
Cried, "Speed the Scottish keel,
When 'mid the thunders of the fray
To God we make appeal!"

Now round about their admiral
Did all the captains flock:

They stood like ships collateral
  Awaiting battle-shock.
Nor Greece, nor Rome of old could boast
  Of sons more free from fear;
Though matchless was the Spanish host
  So quickly drawing near.
In silence and in calmness all
  Awaited Howard's word
The lion's claws to disenthrall,
  With spirits deeply stirred.

Then Howard, with uncovered head
  And face both grave and stern,
Addressed the group; and this he said—
  "To God we trust and turn."
They murmured in reply, "Amen."
  Again was silence kept—
The lions crouched within the men
  And for a moment slept.
"Against us sails the flower of Spain,
  The boldest of her sons;
We'll tell them they have come in vain,
  From mouths of shotted guns!
Ere Philip lands a single man
  In this our native land,
Down sinks each floating barbican
  And every sailor hand!
We fight not only for our home
  With those upon the sea,
But, Parma's prince—the sword of Rome—
  For God and liberty!
And, gentlemen, no time have we
  To waste this weighty day:

We make the peril out at sea
The greater by delay."
"I crave your pardon, Admiral,"
The daring Drake replied—
"I 'm anxious for the carnival
As if it were my bride.
More ready than the foe to come
Are we, I trow, to go,
Though very happy here at home
On sunny Plymouth Hoe.
In all his pride the Spaniard comes,
And England lists the call:
We 'll prove his boasts but sounding drums—
Pride goes before a fall.
The Scotchman's word might well distress
With haste some craven souls:
A half-an-hour, more or less,
Suffices for the bowls.
Before we tarnish Spanish fame
And Philip's raree-show,
Pray give us time to end the game—
Then, bid us weigh and go!"
On Howard's face a moment played
A mingled frown and smile,
As if 't were nature to upbraid,
But wisdom to beguile.
"Aye, let the game completed be!"
The sport was re-begun
With laughter, jest, and repartee;
And Drake it was who won.
The skill the bowling green displayed,
Ere fell the morrow's dew,
With iron balls was made to fade
Upon the rolling blue.

The Sailing of the Sea Dogs.

As speeds the lover to the maid—
  The billows shorewards run—
The waters leap the loud cascade
  When autumn's rain 's begun—
So sped the players down the hill,
  So sped they to the beach;
Of hero joy they felt the thrill,
  It clarioned in their speech.
No thought of danger cast a shade
  Upon the face of one—
No braver wielded Sparta's blade
  Or wore her morion.
With wildfire speed the news had spread,
  And stirred was Plymouth town;
Determination could be read
  In flashing eye and frown
Of sailor and of fisherman,
  The wielder of the spade,
The toiling pale-faced journeyman,
  The matron and the maid.
Excitement like a tempest stirred
  The souls of young and old,
No single craven word was heard,
  On, on the tempest rolled!
As when a hoarse south-wester sweeps
  The wave on Devon's shore,
And high the rolling billow leaps
  With loud exultant roar,
The wild "Hurrahs" of surging crowd
  Swept through each lane and street

And found an echo long and loud
On board the anchored fleet,
And wilder grew as boats sped out
By silent sailors plied,
Transported by the torrent-shout
Of wild exultant pride.
If Spain and Philip had but heard,
If they had heard and seen,
Old Plymouth would their fears have stirred
In that historic scene.
With muttered thunder in the throat
And lightning in the eye,
Prophetic of the storm that smote
And bade the Spaniard die.

With gay click-click each windlass drags
Its weighty anchor free;
The ships display their battle flags
And point their prows to sea.
Hoarse words of stern command are heard,
And act to act they link;
The weathered willing sails ungird,
The metal cables clink,
The seamen haste them fore and aft,
From port to starboard run:
Soon from the sides of every craft
Looks forth the savage gun,
Within whose throat in silence lies
The thunder-voiced decree—
"The flag that flaunts the English skies
Shall sink in English sea!"
"Hurrah! Hurrah!" the landsmen cheer,
"God speed the heroes' keels!

Hurrah for Drake and Frobisher,
  And Howard's battle-peals!"

The wind blows freshly from the sea
  On which the Spaniards ride,
So outwards warped the ships must be
  Against the flowing tide;
And warped they are with more than will—
  And now, the passage passed,
The gusts the spreading canvas fill
  And pipe about the mast.
On, on they speed! and Plymouth's shore
  Fades slowly out of sight;
The daylight bids, to bid no more,
  The pride of Spain "Good night."

The Signal-fires are lit.

As forth from Ida's mount the fires
  To Argos leaped in joy,
To tell to waiting Grecian sires
  The fall of haughty Troy,
So leap the flames from crest to crest
  Across the English shires—
They leap to north and east and west.
  (Of Spanish pride the pyres!)
On Kentish hills the waiting piles
  Receive the kindling brand,
And pass it on four hundred miles
  To far Northumberland.
Each town and hamlet ring their bells,
  And hear the rolling drums;
The blazen blaring trumpet tells
  The great Armada comes.

By bell and drum and trumpet stirred
Men speed them to and fro;
On every hand the cry is heard—
"To arms! To arms! The foe!"
O'er hill and dale the horsemen speed,
O'er fence and field they spur;
The shepherd stops his piping reed
And feels his pulses stir.
As sweeps the wind across the fields
Of waving, yellow corn,
And every ear an answer yields
Of glad submission born,
So sweeps the news o'er England's face,
And each man answers "Aye!"
And hastes to his appointed place
On England's peril-day.
The people and the monarch call;
The nation hastes to arm;
For ever may it thus befall
When freedom feels alarm!

The Armada is sighted.

The twentieth day of bright July
Shines on the Channel's breast;
The ships to windward slowly ply
In battle-order dressed.
Some fragile Cornish fishing boats
Make haste with oar and sail;
The men have left their nets and floats
To tell the stirring tale
Of wondrous ships which they have seen
In wondrous numbers spread:
And all the facts the fleet can glean
Are told in tones of dread.

To northwards lies the Cornish coast
And all its cherished scenes;
To southwards lies the Spanish host,
Which yet the distance screens:
But thin and thinner grows the veil,
As warmer grows the day—
By shouts, 't is rent! "A sail! a sail!"
With mingling, "Where away?"
On comes a lofty galleon's form,
A hundred in her wake,
With thirty thousand men who scorn
The countrymen of Drake.
In scores they burst upon the view
Before the swelling gales;
The confidence of every crew
Seems swelling in the sails.
Right gaily stream the pennons gay
On all the lofty masts;
Right bravely do the trumpets bray
Their thrilling battle-blasts.

As eagerly as eagles fall
To seize the fallen prey,
The Spaniards hear the trumpet-call
Which stirs their hearts to-day.
They throng like bees within a hive—
Loud swells the martial hum—
The gaping ports are all alive.
Hark, hark! the rattling drum.
The arming men prepare to strike
And fast to stations run—
They clash the flashing boarding-pike
And load the pond'rous gun.

Sidonia wears a golden cross
By holy Sixtus blessed,
And this dismisses thoughts of loss
And gives his spirit rest.
In faith are orders put in force
By his confiding host—
They keep upon their eastward course
Towards the Calais coast,
Where, waiting, lies the shallow fleet
Which Parma has arrayed.
(Sidonia and that fleet shall meet
When both shall be dismayed!)
The Englishmen he vainly hopes
Will terror-stricken flee
On seeing what with England copes
Upon an English sea;
But of such stuff are cowards made,
And 't will be ever so—
'T was dauntlessness the men displayed
Who bowled on Plymouth Hoe!

Now full in view the crescent heaves
For half a score of miles,
With banners like the maple leaves
When brightest autumn smiles!
In tenderness the sunlight fawns
As on the galleons flow,
And like a flock of graceful swans
The galliasses row.
The English ships with sails aback
In silence slowly sway:
The Spanish stir not sheet or tack,
But keep their ordered way.

Borne on the south-west breeze's breast
They slowly travel past;
In might and beauty each is dressed—
A floating polyspast.
Four score have passed—still, still they come!
And each her standard flies;
From every port looks out a gun
And dark malicious eyes.
Oh! never since the world was made,
And since the sea has been,
Have billows borne so grand parade—
Such stately vessels seen.

As each draws near the English ships
The Spanish fury grows,
And curses rain from bearded lips
Upon the Saxon foes—
"Down, down with Queen Elizabeth!
Down, down!" they cry again,
"To Englishmen and England death;
But glory be to Spain!"

The First English Attack.

Now flame the eyes of Effingham—
Now Frobisher and Drake
And every Sea-Dog Englishman
A course for battle take.
By ready hands the yards are braced
To catch the swelling breeze—
With speed are lines of eddies traced
Across the Channel seas.
The last of all the galleys passed,
The gunners light the brand,

And while the standards run amast
They silent wait command.
As eagles from a giddy steep
Swoop on a fighting prey,
The Englishmen to windward sweep
To enter on the fray.
Not always to the swift the race,
The combat to the strong—
When patriots the tyrant face
They battle well and long!

The sun has rarely looked upon
Such fateful day as this!
'T is freedom's second Marathon,
And England's Salamis!

The Saxon like a lion runs,
And Fleming's privateer—
Hark! hark the roar of Saxon guns,
And hark the Saxon cheer!
A thousand cannons belch reply
From walls of Spanish oak,
And fiercely rings the battle-cry
Of Spain amid the smoke.
The whizz and whistling of the shots
Make concert with the breeze
And stir the hearts of patriots
As tempests stir the seas.

Oh! woe to thee, Sidonia,
Thou shalt the battle lose!
Woe! woe to many a Spanish ship
In what she has to choose—

To sink and die, or strike her flag
  Of yellow striped with red—
An emblem fit of stolen gold
  And blood of murdered dead.

Flash! flash! in quick succession boom
  Reports which shake the keels,
And where the loftiest galleons loom
  They roar like thunder-peals.
Thick roll the pallid battle-clouds
  As white as driven snow,
They hide the masts and sails and shrouds
  Of struggling friend and foe.
"Hurrah! hurrah!" What means this burst
  Of Anglo-Saxon glee?
The *Hope of Spain* is shattered first
  And sinks beneath the sea!
From off a second flutters fast
  The tyrant flag in fear—
She strikes before the iron blast
  Of Fleming's privateer.
A half-a-score of shattered ships
  Dismasted, drift behind;
Their friends have terror on their lips—
  And refuge in the wind.

As 't were the roar of some cascade
  The conflict's thunders swell—
The victors' cries, and cries for aid
  Are weird as nether-hell!
The strife flows on its gory way
  Beyond the coursing sun
Till stars pour down the silver ray
  Upon the heated gun

And galliass's broken oar
And galleon's shattered side,
On many which shall nevermore
In peaceful haven ride.

The rising morning's vapour's cloak
In part the sun—it glows
And quivers through the mist and smoke
On fighting friends and foes.
The sons of proud Hispania
No longer speak with scorn—
The fingers of Britannia
Their robe of pride have torn !

Each weary day and weary night
Throughout a weary week
The Spaniards well sustain the fight
And friendly Calais seek ;
But where full confidence has been
Are bloody stains and wrecks,
And fearful is the carnage seen
Upon the crowded decks.
Oh ! ghastly lie 'mid smoke and gloom
The men whose work is done,
Beneath the shattered gaff and boom
And silent fallen gun.
Low lie the broken shroud and mast,
The torn and shattered sail,
As if the ships had borne the blast
Of some destructive gale.
The gunners weary are, and grimed,
With wild dishevelled hair,
Still every standing cannon 's primed :
They fight with fierce despair—

They fight with sorrow at their hearts
And tears within their eyes
As more and more the strength departs
On which their hope relies.
By thousands can be counted those
Who ne'er shall strike again!
About the decks in torrents flows
The proudest blood of Spain.

As pale as snow Sidonia is,
And humbled is his pride.
What says Juan de Martinez
Who 's standing at his side?
"Forth to the wind our hopes must go.
(Oh, Spain, the bitter cost!)
If from the east the winds do blow,
Sidonia, we are lost!"

Proud Don Juan de Valdez,
The English press so sore,
His gallant ship dismantled is
And driven to the shore.
Swift as the light felucca
Algerian sailors steer,
Throughout the proud Armada
She scarcely had a peer.

The tidings of the struggle run
Along the English coast,
And shoresmen hear the boom of gun
From galleons hithermost.
When in the parched and sandy waste
A camel falls to die,
From every point the vultures haste
And to the carcass fly:

So forth from every English creek
The armèd fishers pour;
And those who, harassed, shelter seek,
They harass more and more.
From Dartmouth and from Teignmouth,
From Weymouth and from Poole,
With mariners of Lynmouth—
Of the Bristol Channel school;
From Portsmouth and Southampton,
From Ventnor and from Ryde
Come ships and men that hasten on
To taste of battle-tide.

Now Walter Raleigh's sails expand
Towards the Calais shore:
And Oxford comes, and Cumberland,
With heroes many more.
With ringing shouts the battling fleet
Hails each approaching friend,
While they the lusty greeting greet
And back its spirit send.

The Spaniards reach Calais.

With thankful hearts the Calais Roads
The stricken Spaniards view:
Wild terror to the shelter goads—
They haste the passage through.
Though ships are sadly rent and torn,
Though sails are shattered sore,
Though confidence is overborne,
The struggle is not o'er.

The Spaniards greet their Spanish friends
And Spanish banners hail.
Now confidence again uptends—
It sweeps them like a gale!
They hail the fleet of Parma
That waits to bear his host
Which, favoured by Bellona,
Shall dash upon the coast
Where sits the "cursèd woman" *
Who, from dominion hurled,
Shall "find her place with Satan,
And leave to God the world."

Sidonia's knitted brows unbend,
He now no longer sighs;
The terrors of the Channel end
And hope enlights his eyes.
Ambition's visions all return
And on his spirit sit;
His cheeks with anger flush and burn
By vengeance-fever lit.
He dreams of cries for pity,
Of English widows' tears,
The blazing blood-stained city,
And trembling orphans' tears,
Of bitter cries for water
A dying thirst to slake
Amid the battle's slaughter
Or at the flaming stake.
"Once in an English haven
With Parma's zealous host,
The Plymouth curs shall craven
And fret along the coast.

* Queen Elizabeth.

Forth from my crowded galleys
  Shall stream his flashing spears,
And England's hills and valleys
  Shall flow with blood and tears!
When in the streets of London
  The Spanish drums shall roll,
Then, England, hope abandon,
  And think about your soul!"
While thus he dreams he mutters,
  He paces to and fro,
And bitter curses utters—
  Deep curses on the foe!

The day of rest from combat—
  Sweet day of growing hope,
That with the great concordat
  In vain would Saxons cope—
'T is past!—and now outglimmer
  The bright nocturnal gems;
The harbour waters shimmer
  About the Spanish stems.
As gently sweep the breezes,
  As softly breathes the night,
A welcome slumber seizes
  On every weary wight.
Mellifluently and slowly
  The lapping wavelets beat
And soothe the high and lowly
  On board the anchored fleet.
Peace seems to be embracing
  This wondrous Calais scene,
Save where the guards are pacing—
  Or wounded lie, I ween.

How stately look the gallant ships
As they at anchor ride,
The watch-lights' beaming gaily dips
And dances in the tide!
The guns from every loophole,
From every oaken keep,
From every yawning port-hole
Like pointing fingers peep.
Where lofty prows defiance show
And in the darkness loom,
The anchor-lights like planets glow
On every proud jibboom,
While forest-like the lofty spars
Uplift their heads and arms
As if they prayed the silent stars
To save them from alarms.
Beside each frowning galleon-ship
A speedy galliass lies,
And sentries guard with eye and lip
The fleet against surprise.

Sidonia's cabin windows
Are brilliantly alight—
The colours stream like rainbows
Far out into the night
From off the walls' enamel
(Where not a tint is cold),
From polished oaken panel
And flashing cloth of gold.
A costly art shuts out the shade
And leaves the whole aglow:
A contrast show the ebon slaves
Attending to and fro.

The varied light emblazons
The flashing weapons' sheen,
And splendour-dressed companions
Complete the brilliant scene.
Bejewelled and begoldened
(As are the cups they quaff),
By plenteous wine emboldened,
They loudly jest and laugh.

Let Calais waters rest afford!
Let ruby wine o'erflow!
The dead, forgot, lie overboard,
The wounded lie below.

They toast—and each receives a cheer;
The wine cup suckles pride.
The Channel's swelling flood of fear
Is now a fallen tide.
They toast the Pontiff, toast the King,
They toast the Spanish belle,
They, mocking, toast Elizabeth—
Consigning her to hell.

Now has the wassail spirit climbed
The turrets of the brain:
Within the chambers of the mind
It leads its silly train;
It sets the turrets all ablaze,
Unstable makes the walls,
Till some can scarce their goblets raise
Above their swaying spalls.

Oft brimmed Sidonia's flashing cup—
He fills it once again
And bids his dons "Fill up! fill up!!
I toast the sons of Spain

Who march in Parma's gallant ranks
And man our glorious fleet!"
Shouts ringing with accoutre-clanks
The vain announcement greet.
"They'll reap the wheat of English might
Till England's heart is sore,
And thresh the grain of English right
On England's threshing floor!
This ship the wanton queen shall bear
Across the Biscay wave,
And in Madrid she'll trembling hear
The greeting of a slave!
Before King Philip's majesty
Her stubborn knee shall bend,
That his most sacred clemency
May to her sins extend:
And may the royal ear be dead
To her who mercy claims;
And may I pile the faggot-bed
To give her to the flames!"
As if they wondrous wit acclaimed
They loudly laugh "Ha-ha!"
Wine leaves the babbling tongue unreined
To ride anathema.

Sidonia calls aloud to fetch
The ship's musicians in,
And threats attendants' necks to stretch
As fiddlers stretch the string.
(Soon dies the slave who lingers.)
They quickly summoned are,
And skilled Castilian fingers
Thrum-thrum the light guitar.

The English Fire-ships.

A stealthy course the darkness through
Some lightless vessels take,
And silent are. Each silent crew
Towards the Spaniards make,
As creeps the subtle tiger
Amid the jungle's grass.
As deadly as the viper
Their forms of evil pass!
Unconscious of the dangers are
The men who sentry keep:
Alert the Sea-Dog rangers are
And waiting on the deep.

What glow is this uprearing
So near the Spanish lines?
What lights are these appearing
Like glowing almandines?
They lie directly windward
Along the rippling main.
Is it the anchored vanguard
To which they appertain?
Red, red o'erhead the heaven flecks,
Red glows the wave below,
And plainly seen on kindling decks
Men hasten to and fro.
The blazing ships draw nearer—
Come swiftly on the wind;
And now the truth is clearer—
Appals the Spanish mind!

A lightning flash of terror
Bursts through the flame and smoke!
The Spaniards see with horror
The Sea-Dogs' master-stroke.
Now spreads around the gleaming of
The flames that fast aspire,
And fearful is the meaning of
The Spanish cry of "Fire!"

A thousand Spanish watchmen
Are shouting in the glow,
And lips with horror ashen
The brazen trumpets blow.
As when the fierce tornado
Sweeps o'er a Western plain,
The Spaniards and bravado
Confusion smites again.
Shriek, terror-stricken keepers!
Ye blood-stained myrmidons!
Awake, awake the sleepers!
Rouse up the dosing dons!
Abaddon comes to pay you
In coin you understand!
Sidonia's words betray you—
Ha! ha! the flaming brand!

The vast Armada listens
To frantic English cheers;
Now English sabres glisten,
And so do Spanish tears.
Swift row the Sea-Dogs' barges;
Fast drift the hulks of flame;
The peril but enlarges
Which threats to ruin Spain.

Crack! crack! the shots are raining,
And countless cannon roar;
The English tars are straining
The pliant ashen oar.
Now distance and the darkness
Their forms in safety fold:
(Oft of their pluck and starkness
The story shall be told.)
Dun rolls the smoke and dunner,
Loud roar the yellow flames;
In vain the Spanish gunner
The shotted cannon aims.
The dumb and fiery masses
Possess no soul to quail,
Tide-borne along the passes,
No need have they of sail.
Their helmsman is the flowing
Of the silent Channel tide—
As deadly as unknowing
They near and nearer glide.
The hero and the coward
Recoiling from the heat
Are loudly cursing Howard
And his terror-dealing fleet.

Now smokes a lofty galleon
Which windward anchored swings;
The crackling tongues now bourgeon—
Destruction to her clings!
Her hempen shrouds are flaming tar,
Her sails are sheets of flame!
Now topples—falls! the blackened spar
Without the cannon's aim.

The galliass now kindles fast
That lies beneath her lee:
Entangled 'neath the fallen mast,
Her seamen strive to free.
From off the doomèd galleon pours
A struggling human mass
And bears confusion to the rowers
On board the galliass.
Ten thousand human voices
Swell like an ocean flood
Which on its way rejoices
And hurls the flying scud,
That hisses like the burning
Which brightens more and more,
And quickens the discerning
Of the thousands who complore.
Wilder grows confusion all
Along the Spanish lines:
The fire-ships' intrusion all
Their concert undermines,
Except the concert of the thought
That safety lies in flight.
Right speedily is safety sought!
But flight is oversight.

"Sidonia, you had better face
The terrors you would flee
Than find yourself in evil case
Upon the open sea":
Thus speaks Juan de Martinez.
Sidonia hearkens, pale;
But ev'ry anchor windlassed is
And loosened every sail.

The Flight of the Spanish Fleet.

Since Xerxes' fleet in days of eld
  Took flight from Salamis,
This struggling world has not beheld
  A sight to equal this.
As then, 't is Liberty assails
  A force unknown before;
As then, Oppression spreads her sails
  And bends the fleeing oar.

Out hastes the great Armada o'er
  The darkened open sea.
May God forbid that evermore
  Shall be such misery!
With order gone and courage lost
  'T will prove an easy prey
For that exultant Sea-Dog host
  When breaks the dawn of day.
Oh, how the oars and sails must jar
  On thoughts of yesternight!
The hopes of Parma shattered are
  By proud Sidonia's flight.
Ne'er from the crowded galleys
  Shall stream his flashing spears
To stain the hills and valleys
  With English blood and tears;
Ne'er in a London thoroughfare
  The Spanish drums shall roll,
Nor chain and stake 'mid smoke and flare
  Please blood-stained Parma's soul!

The ships of fire flame behind
Along the Calais shore:
Sidonia joys to feel the wind—
They trouble him no more.
His courage rises with the breeze,
And hope upbrightens fast—
('T is often thus when manhood sees
The fatal die is cast)—
And he resolves, if breaking day
Reveal the English fleet,
That long and fierce shall be the fray
When they in battle meet.
A thousand hopes and wishes sweep
Through his excited brain:
Meanwhile the Sea-Dogs plough the deep
And on the Spaniards gain.

The Second English Attack.

Dawn breaks—south-eastwards lies the line
Of Gravelines' sandy shore,
And eastwards grows a light carmine
Which broadens more and more.
Retreating mists and shades of night
The Straits of Dover flee;
And now Sidonia sees a sight
He does not wish to see—
Exulting comes the English fleet
And swiftly makes its way.
With lusty cheers the Sea-Dogs greet
Sidonia's brave array.

They now their battle-order take,
And skill is well displayed:
'T is felt dominion lies at stake
And Spanish gasconade.
The tiger of the pride of Spain
Now feels himself at bay—
Displays his teeth and claws amain
And scents a bloody day!
Again outsounds the trumpet-call
And roll of rattling drum.
Again the decks are all alive
And loudly swells the hum
As arming men prepare to strike
And fast to stations run
They clash the flashing boarding pike
And load the deadly gun.
Oh, splendid is the morning scene
With morning light aglow!
The water narrows fast between
Sidonia and the foe.

Now bursts the storm! Oh, God! for this
Were men and waters made?
Alas! through blood man plods to bliss
And slays fanfaronade.
Fierce breaks the roar of English guns,
And those of Spain reply;
Along the lines the battle runs,
And death and anguish hie
Where beats the battle's awful hail,
Where rends the solid oak,
Where falls the battle's bloody flail
With desolating stroke.

Six weary hours the fight goes on—
Stern manhood's stern assay!
Shall time reveal your paragon,
Oh, epoch-making day?
The Spanish tiger fiercely fights,
He merits no disdain;
But hope his eye no longer lights
Of victory for Spain—
For Spanish decks all ghastly are
With men whose race is run,
Who lie beside the shattered spar
Unconscious of the sun.
Again with broken shroud and mast,
With torn and shattered sail,
The galleons look as if the blast
Of some destructive gale
Had torn their canvas into shreds
And laid their glory low,
Or Jove had with the bolts he sheds
Well proved himself their foe.
Now helpless many a gallant ship
Drifts t'wards the Holland sands,
Courageous men with quiv'ring lip
Can only fold their hands
As nearer to the foaming shore
They draw—and nearer still.
God pity them! their hearts are sore
And vain their seaman-skill.
Now galleon after galleon grates
Upon the treach'rous sands
Where many of their galliass mates
Defy the rower's hands,

And like to crippled creatures lie,
The prey of wind and sea—
There ships and crews are doomed to die
By battle's stern decree!
More confident the English grow,
More lustily they cheer:
They see the failing of the foe—
His proofs of growing fear.

The fortunes of the day are now
Beyond the shade of doubt.
"Destruction!" do the English vow
With vengeance-prompted shout.
As wolves pursuing stumbling steeds
The Sea-Dogs hunt the prey:
As more and more the Spaniard bleeds
The more they long to slay.
Strike, strike your flag, Sidonia,
And lessen death and pain!
"Strike!" "Fight!" are but synonyma
For misery to Spain.

The Spanish Council of War.

Sidonia now a council calls
Where wildly beats a tide—
The billow of discretion falls
On rocks of Spanish pride
'Mid mingling sounds of hell and man,
The piping of the breeze,
The groaning of the dying and
The moaning of the seas.

To leeward lies no friendly port;
To windward sail the foe—
The seamen's courage lies amort
Beneath unmeasured woe!
The wind forbids them to return
Along the way they came:
Their hearts like those of gamblers burn
When hopeless is the game.
Though each a proven veteran
Of former fighting fleets,
Most grave the looks of ev'ry man
Who in the council meets.
Like weights upon their spirits press
Their fear and murdered hope;
For fortune's gift is merciless—
A rayless periscope.
They'd give the world to feel again
The roll of Biscay's wave;
But they must sail a sea of pain
And face a yawning grave!
When courage has no suretyship
To light the clouded day,
Few words become its trembling lip,
For peril hates delay.
No time have they for wasting breath;
Fate thunders at the door—
"Surrender, or prepare for death!
This—this, and nothing more!"
Juan de Martinez looks sad,
And haggard is his face
As one whom trouble doth be-mad
And hopelessness outpace.

'T is felt he best can be their guide
Who knows of danger most.
Oh, hardly bends the head of pride
When fate forbids to boast!
Sidonia lists in silence, and
In silence list they all,
As north he points a bloody hand
Their minds to disenthrall,
And speaks with mournful vehemence
Which mingles with despair
And plainly feels the consequence
Which trembles in the air—
"Let death o'ertake the hands which haul
Another standard down!
We must obey our honour's call
Though gone is our renown!
The end for which we sailed from Spain
Is now beyond our reach;
Ten thousand of our best are slain!
So let me you beseech
To northwards steer, as bids the wind,
And battle as we go;
Delay will leave but more behind
And gratify the foe!
'T is best, though bitter is the cost—
So let the canvas fill!
Count Parma all his faith has lost
In our Armada's skill.
The hostile fleet increases sail
And, doubtless, hourly grows.
There 's mercy in an Orkney gale
But not in Saxon foes!"

The Spaniards steer Northwards.

See!—see! the vast flotilla's course
To northward slowly bends!
A south-west wind is piping hoarse
And grandeur to it lends.
How proudly swell the stretching sails
Above each rolling side,
As north the line of battle trails
Across the heaving tide
And sunlight floods the whole with gold,
As though no passion-flood
Had ever o'er its beauty rolled
And made it stream in blood.
Like vast and frightened swans that haste
Across a mammoth lake,
They speed along the wat'ry waste,
And wounded friends forsake.
Heartrending are the cries of grief,
The useless wild appeals
Sent forth to their departing chief
From off the stranded keels
Which helpless lie, a hapless score
Along a hated strand—
They loom like rocks on Holland's shore
Amid the surf and sand.

On! on! Oh fleeing residue!
On! on; with terror's speed!
For hungry English hawks pursue
And burn with vengeance-greed!
Vain, vain is Spanish seaman-skill
And vain is Spanish pluck:

Disaster dire pursues them still,
  And gone is Spanish luck.
The devil seems to lurk within
  Each barking English gun,
And be the hellish origin
  Of all the mischief done.
With reeking decks, with shattered sides,
  With shot be-riddled sails,
God help you on the northern tides
  Amid the northern gales!

Slow sinks as in a sea of blood
  The golden summer sun;
The coasts of England fringe the flood—
  An English day is done:
And English coasts and English day
  Nerve well the English arm,
While Spaniards sicken of the fray
  And lack a counter-charm.
To seas unknown they dread to go,
  And fears their souls enwrap—
Dark fears which bear a ratio
  To fanciful mishap.
The night but to their dreading adds—
  The very stars are weird!
And breaking dawn but superadds
  More terrors to be feared.
So, day by day, with failing hand
  The shrinking sons of Spain
Drift farther from their native land—
  Which few shall see again!

The English abandon the Pursuit.

Thus England's danger fades away—
The thunder-clouds disperse—
Thus breaks the dawn of Freedom's day
Across the universe.
The flying ships are powerless
To threat an English right:
Farewell to Spanish haughtiness!
Farewell to Philip's might!
Along the rugged Scottish shore
The trembling Spaniards flee,
And all the Church's saints implore
To give the kind decree
That they the coast of Spain may hail,
And see her sunny seas—
May breathe again the scented gale
From off the orange trees
And be once more where friends had clung,
Once more those friends to greet—
And hear once more the Spanish tongue,
And tread a Spanish street!

Oh, stormy Orkney Islands,
And wind-swept Hebrides!
Oh, Irish north-coast highlands,
And danger-burdened seas!
What fearful sights shall ye behold,
What wrecks of men and ships,
What stirring tales of blood and gold
Shall move your fishers' lips
When 'mid the mist and tempest,
The quicksand, rock, and sea,
Shall other dangers manifest,
And other contests be.

Now Howard signals to his fleet
To cease the bloody chase:
In prompt response each helm and sheet
Change both the course and pace.
The ships wheel round and homewards sail—
How merrily they steer!—
The foe is yielded to the gale
With welkin-rending cheer.

How England received the News.

Now o'er the face of Albion
There rolls a joyous wave;
The past has seen no paragon
Of tribute to the brave.
Up silver Thames it swiftly sweeps
As inward sail the fleet;
On, Londonwards, its course it keeps
To thrill each thronging street—
It flutters forth from pennoned mast,
It shouts from deck and shore,
More loudly swells, and breaks at last
In one exultant roar
Of peals of bells, and trumpets' blasts,
And shouts of London throng.
Beyond the light of day it lasts,
And swiftly rolls along
From town to town, from man to man,
Across the waiting shires:
Still, ebbing not where it began,
But breaking forth in fires
Which, crackling, burn on ev'ry crest
And ruddy stain the skies,
And blaze in streets deprived of rest
By heartfelt joyous cries.

Now wildly well the pealing bells
From old St. Paul's ring out.
Like booming waves the cheering swells,
And mingles with the shout
Which drowns the tramp and martial stir
And roll of rattling drums—
"The Queen! the Queen!—God bless her!
The Queen!—she comes! she comes!"
Oh, ne'er before those ancient streets
Were by such pageant trod!
Elizabeth her people greets,
And goes to thank her God.

Thus England in her agony
Gave Liberty its birth,
And set a glorious galaxy
To light the darkened earth.
The glory of the victory
Shall more and more increase,
Till men shall fold their battle-flags
In industry and peace.

LOUIS PHILIPPE DELARUE.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

Some thousands of French fishermen leave France every spring for Newfoundlànd, to engage in the fisheries, an industry aptly termed the nursery of the French navy. They return in the autumn. Dieppe was formerly an important starting-point for these *Terreneuviens*, and from its haven sailed Delarue in the *Marguerite*.

I.

The Sailing and the Wreck.

THE bells of old Saint Jacques were ringing,
In the old grey tower swinging—
Solemn was the tenor's boom:
And the music winged its flight
O'er the Channel wave-bedight,
Through the bosom of the night,
Up the ladder of the light
Streaming down on town and tower
With the weird poetic power
Dwelling in the rounded moon.

While the bells were swinging—ringing—
Fishermen in concert singing,
Windlassed in a cable's length.
They were men of Northern France—
Men whose fathers bore the lance—
Showed a manly arrogance,
Fought for—won—a *resiance*;
Heard the battle-cry of Harold,
Followed Taillefer as he carolled—
Norman William's hope and strength.

The anchor left the moon-lit water:
Then the night-wind came and caught her—
Caught the old brig *Marguerite.*
Like a swivel round she swung;
From her yards the topsails hung,
Braced they were, the song was sung—
"Yo heave ho!"—with lusty lung.
Then she sped—and fast—and faster—
While the shore seemed sweeping past her.
Who 'd have thought the brig so fleet!

On the wind from out the southwards
Through the channel passed she outwards—
Passed the lighthouse—passed the pier,
Winging on her silent flight
Like a spirit of the night,
O'er the Channel wave-bedight
Dancing in the full-moon light.
Onwards went the stout old vessel
With Atlantic waves to wrestle,
With a crew unknown to fear.

When the sailors stopped their singing
Faint they heard the distant ringing—
Listened till it died away.
Louis Philippe Delarue,
Sadness came and conquered you:
Every man among your crew
Noticed it and spoke of you.
(Louis Philippe was the skipper
Of the stout old fishing clipper.)
"*Slack the topsail sheets! Belay!*"

On the pier a woman sighing,
In her arms an infant lying,
Watched the sailing *Marguerite*—
Watched her growing smaller—smaller,
Thinking would some ill befall her,
Picturing perils to enthrall her,
Longing to shriek—shriek and call her—
Hopes and fears within her thronging,
All her soul consumed with longing
His return. Oh, bitter-sweet!

Marguerite they called her also—
Ship and she were one day called so
One and twenty years before—
When the grey-haired feeble dame
(Marie Augustine Duquesne)
Down the cobbled footway came
(How the fishers cheered the dame!)
To the place where axe and hammer,
Shaped the ship in wondrous manner—
There she launched the ship from shore.

Time his scythe swept swiftly round him,
Caught the builder, smote him, bound him,
Laid him in the grave to rest:
Caught the owner, Jean Duquesne,
(Dearly loved he ship and main!)
Many years the men had lain
Free from sorrow, free from pain;
Still the vessel launched that day
Came to port and sailed away
Over the Atlantic's breast.

The babe who saw the vessel christened
'T was who stood that night and listened
With a baby of her own—
Listened as each noisy bell
Shouted to the brig "Farewell!"
And the strokes to her were knells.
There was sorrow in the bells
To the wife and youthful mother
Striving hard her tears to smother;
And the tenor seemed to moan.

As she gazed the moonlight aided:
But at last the stout ship faded.
Then her homeward way to trace,
Lonely, dreary Marguerite,
White as any winding sheet,
Slowly walked the cobbled street—
And her look was wondrous sweet!
Louis Philippe Delarue,
How that woman worshipped you,
Weeping o'er your baby's face!

Till the round moon waned to crescent,
Till its light became quiescent
And forsook the starry dome,
Westward sailed the *Marguerite*,
Borne by winds both fair and fleet,
Till the driving mist and sleet
Said to Louis, "Be discreet!"
Every star its light concealing
Deeper grew the lonely feeling—
Every man had thoughts of home.

The wind increased: her speed grew quicker:
Fog and snow-squalls thicker—thicker
Curtained everything from view!
Scarcely could the yards be seen,
Flying snow-flakes whirled between—
More unpleasant days, I ween,
Rarely are, if ever, seen.
As the sprays came swishing, swirling,
Out through scuppers rushing, curling,
Pleased was Captain Delarue—

Pleased because the fierce wind favoured,
Pleased, although the old ship laboured,
Creaked and groaned before the gale.
"We shall Cape Race lighthouse see
Ere to-morrow noon," said he:
And he found the men agree.
Then he rubbed his hands in glee.
Though the spars were creaking madly,
Though the canvas strained so sadly,
Lessen he would not his sail.

Plunged the ship like wounded stallion
Of a baffled war battalion,
In a struggle fierce and fell!
As when fanged and taloned beast
Howls and gloats o'er jungle feast,
Came the wind from east-north-east,
Lashing billows into yeast.
Ocean's terrors there assembling,
Through them all the brig went trembling
In the darkness black as hell.

On and on, like frightened demon,
Guided by half-frozen seamen
Fled the brig of Delarue.
Woe to ship and crew—alas!
In the track they willed to pass
Lay a white stupendous mass—
Like an isle of solid glass!
Not a sign, a sound or motion
Gave this terror of the ocean.
Marguerite, God pity you!

Wind and water wildly lashing,
'Gainst the ice the brig went crashing
Helpless in the tempest's hand!
Human skill could nothing do!
Louis Philippe Delarue
And his terror-stricken crew
What had happened scarcely knew—
Scarcely had they time for thinking,
But they knew that they were sinking
On the Banks of Newfoundland!

Dimly o'er them rose the summit
Of the berg, as if a plummet
Had been used in rearing it;
Lifting high its cap of snow,
Up five hundred feet or so,
Where the storm-fiend cried "Ho, ho!"
While the waters down below
Strove to rend the icy basement,
Roared like monsters in amazement
By a shaft of terror hit.

What tongue can tell the wild confusion?
Language can but more illusion,
Fancy paint the wild distress.
Boats amid such seething sea
Worse than useless proved to be.
Death to windward! death to lee!
Hope was not, and could not be!
Then—then did Captain Delarue
Dying with his dying crew
Sorrow o'er his recklessness!

From the berg the ship rebounded,
But the cruel waters hounded—
Dashed her 'gainst the ice again
Waterlogged and all besprayed,
Wrecked beyond all human aid,
How her rending planking groaned!
How her timbers creaked and moaned!
Then the reckless Delarue
Something from the vessel threw
With a stifled cry of pain.

The *Marguerite* lurched low to starboard
And the sailors clung to larboard
When the ocean swallowed her.
On the seas went surging—on!
Heedless of the drowned throng;
And the winds the whole night long
Seemed to howl a triumph-song.
One upset and broken dory
Spake by silence, told the story
To the passing mariner.

II.

The Apparition.

The bells of old Saint Jacques were ringing,
In the darkened tower swinging,
Weaving mystic aural spells;
And their music winged its flight
Through the vapours of the night,
Veiling star and planet-light,
Hiding all the world from sight—
Hiding tide and town and tower,
Mingling with the falling shower
From the rolling, tolling bells:

And a woman sat and hearkened—
In a chamber semi-darkened
She her loneliness beguiled.
As her ear the tenor caught
Sorrow to her soul was brought,
And she fell in deepest thought
Till her spirit, terror-fraught,
Led her into bitter weeping,
Banished far the thought of sleeping,
Set her sobbing o'er her child.

The hand of silence seizing—quelling
The vibrations, and expelling
Ringers from the bell-rope lair,
Round each rusty iron tongue
In each brazen throat and lung
Lingered an unearthly hum—
A belfry epicedium:
And the watching woman started
(Not that she was timid-hearted),
Hearing footsteps on the stair—

And the tread, familiar seeming,
Whirled her into wakeful dreaming,
Turned her gaze towards the clock.
To the thought, "Has he returned?"
Every hope was subalterned.
Brief delusion dearly earned!—
How her eager spirit yearned!—
She could hear her bosom heaving,
She could feel her infant cleaving—
Then there came a softened knock.

On the landing surely lingers
He who knocks with muffled fingers
And who never knocked before.
To the fastened door she flew—
"Louis Philippe, is it you?
Oh, beloved, tell me true!"
(Drowning then was Delarue.)
At the open passage standing
No one saw she on the landing,
No one at the open door.

There she stood and sadly pondered,
Pressed her throbbing brows and wondered—
"Do I sleep, or do I wake?
Are things really what they seem?
Do I think, or only dream?"
Shadows of the unforeseen
Fall on ev'ry life, I ween,
Like the darkness which envelops
Ere the thunderstorm develops,
Making man and Nature quake.

Then the portal softly closing,
Sat she where the babe was dozing,
Strove her terror to restrain—
Terror like a barbèd dart
Buried in her aching heart—
Strove in spite of mental smart
Babe and grief to keep apart.
Scarce a minute was she seated
Ere the footfalls were repeated
And the knocking came again!

White as though in death she slumbered,
Horrored, she the knockings numbered,
Almost maddened by the strain.
Then (as one who slumbers deep,
Wandering in his tragic sleep,
Wakens when constrained to leap
Over some stupendous steep)
She again threw wide the portal—
Yearning for the face of mortal—
Yearning for a face in vain!

There again she stood and pondered,
Pressed her fevered brows and wondered,
Gazing down the darkened stair.
Myst'ry seemed to appertain!
Cold the night of wind and rain
Blew from off the fog-clad main
And along the cobbled lane,
Touched the mother, made her shiver,
Smote the lamp-light, made it quiver
On the infant's face and hair—

Smote the flame till it departed,
And the babe from slumber started—
Sobbed amid the sudden gloom.
Marguerite the haunted door
Reverently closed once more,
Feeling sadder, more forlore
Than she ever felt before;
Clasped the child in her embraces,
Kissed away its sorrow's traces
With a consciousness of doom.

Then (the shaded lamp rekindled)
Sat she deep in thought as mingled
As the night mist, rain and gloom—
Thought resembling flying wheels,
Which uneven light reveals
While it more than half conceals,
And the sober judgment reels!
Was it truth or was it error
That the baby stared in terror
At the portal of the room?

Marguerite, almost distracted,
Saw that thus the infant acted
When the third low knocking came.
"Visitor, my heart is sore—
Bid me not to suffer more!
Open for yourself the door
Or depart and come no more!
Lone I am, my spirit aching;
Sad I am, my heart is breaking!
Of your coming what 's the aim?"

Answer came there none, nor token;
But the door burst wildly open—
Again the wind from off the main
Swept the lone apartment round
With a vague uncertain sound
(As of engines underground
Throbbing in a depth profound),
Mingled with the stifled shrieking
Of a wretch for mercy seeking;
And blew out the lamp again!

She, some dark conviction fearing,
Saw with awe a form appearing—
Dearer—Oh, by far!—than life.
Dimly seen, yet clear to view,
Stood the figure—Delarue!
To her woman's nature true,
Joy and sorrow pierced her through.
With expression weird and wild
Gazed he on the wakened child,
Gazed in silence on his wife.

Then cried she, by frenzy maddened,
By the vision strangely gladdened,
"Speak, or I shall die of grief!
What has happened, Louis?—say!
Is the ship a castaway?
Have you come to me to stay?
Break this awful silence, pray!"
He his dumbness left unbroken,
But he gave her silent token—
Gave her heart a sad relief.

Spread his hands that looked so ashen,
Smote them thrice as if in passion—
In a hurricane of dread!
Then his arms apart he threw,
Spread his ashen palms to view,
As the dying say, "Adieu!"
To the worldly residue.
Then the figure fled for ever.
'Louis, I shall see thee never!
Christ sustain me! Thou art dead!"

III.

The Bottle on the Beach.

The bells of old Saint Jacques were sounding,
In the grey old tower bounding—
Mad it seemed were they who rang!
Every bellrope-pulling wight
Rang his bell with all his might,
And the tones in noisy flight
Wavered in the wind and light—
Now they seemed asleep and dreaming,
Now awake, alarmed, and screaming
As in fright, their brazen clang.

Like the sounds of dancers tripping,
Rained the tones upon the shipping
Nestled in the haven's bowl—
On the colours Gallican,
On the busy waterman,
On the castle's barbican
And its lolling veteran,
On the busy sons and daughters
Toiling on and by the waters
Which along the shore inroll.

Like to wings of varied feather,
Flashing in the golden weather
Of the fairest tropic clime,
(Where the rolling waves arise,
Where the flying sprays baptise,
Where the soaring sea-mew flies,)
Spread and furled in varied size,
Sails of black, and red, and yellow,
Buff, and brown, and bright, and mellow—
Canvas pinions maritime.

O'er the British Channel, glory
Worthy of a fairy story
Quivered in the golden mist—
Airy, fairy curtain spun
By the burning August sun
Ere his heated race was run,
And which wrapped him when 't was done—
When his reddened face was plunging
And the light of day expunging
In a sea of amethyst.

To the bells a widow hearkened,
Wrapped as one who hears a legend
Which enthralls the very soul,
Makes of life the wildest dream
Of the unknown and unseen
Whirled in mingled gloom and gleam,
(Like a maddened moonlit stream)
Which enthralls both sight and hearing,
Wakens hoping, wakens fearing
Tremulous beyond control.

On her features, thin and ashen,
Who could gaze without compassion
Such as bids the tears to start?
Sorrow-burdened were her sighs,
Sorrow lay within her eyes,
Sorrow which despair implies,
Sorrow such as never dies—
Chafing, as the restless ocean,
Throbbing, sobbing, with emotion
On the shore-line of her heart.

On her brow lay lines of sadness,
In her eyes there beamed no gladness,
Where of old it ever beamed—
Twinkled like a star in space—
Lighting all the merry face,
When her beauty (now a trace)
Dazzled through the bridal lace.
As the morning sunlight glimmers
Through the pane where hoar-frost shimmers,
Through the veil her beauty gleamed.

The share of sorrow's plough had fallowed
In a soil affection-hallowed—
Furrowed deep her brow and cheek.
In her gentle eyes lay meres,
Sources of two streams of tears.
Ah! the cheek-rose disappears
When sad hope, deferred, and fears
Blast it like a scorching tempest,
Tread it in their weary contest
For the spirit of the meek.

Though three weary years had flitted,
Hope was still 'gainst fearing pitted—
Hope of *what* she could not say.
Fear had grown to huge despair.
(Mark the widow's whitened hair,
List her tones of pressing care.)
Hope was valiant still to dare—
Would not quit the field of fancy,
But found strange coadjuvancy
In conviction, night and day.

In the heavens of her sorrow
Shone a planet, called To-morrow,
Which no eye but hers could see.
Louis Philippe Delarue,
Oaken ship and Norman crew,
Lingered in the minds of few,
And they daily fainter grew.
Neighbours' thoughts became deflected
And the mystery neglected
Save by this pale devotee.

As she listened to the ringing,
She in fancy heard the singing
Of her husband's toiling crew,
Mingling with the clicking sound
Of the windlass whirling round
When the anchor broke its ground
And the brig was outward bound.
Floating on the harbour's water,
What a stately ship she thought her—
Fishing brig of Delarue!

Wider grew the strand and wider.
Living laughter stood beside her
In her dark-haired merry boy,
Who a helpless babe had lain
Heedless of the wind and rain,
Heedless of his mother's pain
When the ghost-hand knocked again—
Who from out his slumber started
When the wind-smote light departed
With the light of wifely joy.

Lower fell the tide and lower
(Just as if an unseen mower
Scythed the waters from the shore)
Till upon the shining sand
Of the sun-reflecting band
Bordering the outer strand,
Dropped from out the ocean's hand
Which with weeds the sand had littered,
Lay a gem-like thing which glittered—
Seemed to glitter more and more!

While the mother gazed and pondered,
Gazed the merry child and wondered,
Shading with his hand his eyes.
Eagerness was in his look,
So his childish hand she took,
While her own with tremor shook.
"Mother! mother!" said he, "look!"
Though the willing parent seeming,
She was strangely pained, and dreaming—
Dreams like his who dreams he dies!

All that glitters is not golden,
(Knowledge sometimes wisely holden),
'T was a bottle that thus shone!
While the widow meek and mild
Feeling by the fact beguiled
At the object-lesson smiled,
Anger swelled within the child,
And in childish rage he smote it—
Cast a stone upon and broke it
As his elders might have done.

Something 'mid the fragments fluttered—
(Sad the cry the widow uttered—
Kiss me!—kiss me, oh! my son!)
To the myst'ry 't was *the clue*,
Penned by Captain Delarue,
Which he 'mid the tempest threw
Ere he sank with all his crew,
While against the iceberg's basement
They were dashing in amazement—
There to dash till life was done.

IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

I.

SUNRISE.

AS polished steel the sea all rippleless outspreads,
A vast and circled shield cast on the earth.
A streak of quiv'ring light Venus, as herald, sheds—
A bar of silver on the shield's east girth.

The silent watchers of the constellations flee—
Blow out their silver lamps and hide themselves
Before the face of him whom they from heaven foresee—
Desert the sky's blue field—depart like fairy elves.

Like resting bird the ship in silence lies asleep,
A boss upon the centre of the shield;
Her rigging, spars and lights reflecting in the deep,
Confused like lamps and trees within a weald.

The helmsman holds the wheel with careless hands, as he
Who lightly holds the reins of standing steeds;
In listless attitudes the watch look on the sea:
To home and friends the mind of each man speeds

As wild in flight as untamed birds deprived of sight,
Which hither and then thither dart and wheel.
Our wildest dreams are not in sleep and of the night:
Devotion is not deep because we kneel.

Now on the east horizon—on the great shield's rim—
  Appears a belt of light with tapered ends
And tinted like a pale red rose. The belt is dim—
  Less dim—now bright—and now to scarlet tends!

Venus turns pallid and withdraws her silver bar
  As if to be in readiness for flight:
She seems a jewel on a fading blue simar—
  Upon the skirt by some mistake empight.

Upwards and outwards spreads the rosy blush, till all
  The eastern heaven assumes the tint,
And pendent vapours spread a scarlet pall
  Bedecked with gold this instant from the mint.

Each minute—second! calls increasing glory forth,
  Glory beyond the power of words to paint,
Till all the gorgeous east around to south and north
  Is like a conflagration passed beyond restraint.

Oh, splendid curtains of the rising god's rich couch!
  What unseen spirit-hands your folds unbind?
You signal with reflected flame the orb's debouch—
  He comes! he comes! hail him, all human-kind!

Venus is gone! once more her morning story told,
  Up leaps the god! in dazzling brightness clad,
And at his magic touch the ocean turns to gold
  And looks all joyful where the whole looked sad.

Great sheets of yellow flame appear the hanging sails:
  The masts and all on board that sunwards show
All yellow gold appear—the shrouds and brails—
  From truck to water line the ship 's aglow.

The helmsman and the look-out screen their aching eyes
As though a furnace opened to their gaze,
Appearing clad in garments of the sun's own guise—
With glory e'en their tatters are ablaze!

Abaft the starboard quarter, where the sky looks cold,
A line of deepest blue defined and clear—
Like to a hem of indigo on flashing cloth of gold—
The footprints of the morning breeze appear

And sweep with eagle speed the sleeping main,
As sweeps the shadow of a cloud at noon.
The listless seamen are awake—alert again—
(As men are always to receive a boon)

To trim the sheets and haul the larboard braces in.
Flap! boom! the topsails spread before the wind
And cause the ship to move and like a spider spin
A trailing web—the wake she leaves behind.

The sun awaked the wind—the wind the ship—the ship the sailors all,
And now the wavelets wake and rippling run.
Behind the ship the lengthened shadows vaguely fall;
Before, the flaming path points to the sun.

II.

NOON.

Unbroken blue the vault of heaven extends above,
As 't were a vast and glorious temple-dome
By superhuman hands upreared in toiling love
For mankind's worship, and for mankind's home.

Unbroken blue the tropic sea spreads round about—
The pale blue temple's stainless dark blue floor,
On which a concourse vast of waves—a revel-rout—
In joyful movement discipline ignore.

They leap and clap their hands as if in wild applause,
They give a greeting to the rushing gales
Which like to deep bassoons play on without a pause
Among the straining cordage and the well-stretched sails.

An ark tall-canopied the ship moves swiftly on
Upon the shoulders of the surging crowds.
How grand! how vast she seems! with none to paragon—
Spray on her deck and strain in weather shrouds.

From off the centre of the temple roof, the sun
Pours down upon the billow-crowded floor
Intensest light and heat, before he overrun
The half-way mark 'twixt morn's and even's door.

Black shadows play and sway about the rolling decks,
So narrow they, no shade do they afford—
In constant movement useless—merely flecks—
From side to side they move—some overboard.

Good humour lights the captain's bronzed and bearded face
Rings in his voice and sparkles in his eye.
He tells again old tales with laughter and grimace.
Each tale half truth—always the greater lie—

Yet he the soul of honour, and possessed of heart
Sufficient for the bodies of a score;
Full of kind words and deeds, and ready to impart
To him in need, though scanty his own store.

Aloft, from time to time, he casts his practised glance
(As searching as an eagle's) to the sails.
He dearly loves to hear the windy resonance
And tapping of the loosely-hanging brails.

The helmsman knits his shaggy brows as if in ire,
And holds the throbbing wheel as in a vise;
The angled rudder and the rushing sea conspire
To give his muscles their full exercise.

Communing with the compass, converse holds he not—
His but to watch, to listen, to obey,
And keep the point marked "east" against the metal dot
While speeds the ship like well-spurred galloway.

The busy cook within his galley softly hums
And clinks and clangs his own accomp'nyment;
Black as a kettle's base and plump as his own buns
To wind and weather he 's indifferent.

On speedy wing the graceful sea-fowl follow fast—
They seem to me the souls of seamen drowned,
Who have for sailors, ships, and ocean's briny blast
Dumb love, which they are yearning to propound.

Now like to children's tethered kites aloft they soar;
Now plunge like meteors t'wards the leaping waves;
Now, wheeling o'er the taffrail, they appear to gloar—
As might the souls of those in wat'ry graves.

Proclaiming noon, four times the bell ting-tings,
And every post of duty changes hands.
To trav'lling ships (and worlds) unbroken order clings,
Though at the wheel another steersman stands.

III.

SUNSET.

O'er the sea's edge the sun a dazzling disc
In splendour hangs, preparing for his plunge:
Upon the heaven's bright page he stamps an asterisk
Of yellow beams which western things expunge.

With floods of flame and light the waterflood he laves:
The ship, it seems, has sailed through molten gold
Which looks as though it boiled, so bright the flashing waves
Which from the moving taffrail lie outrolled.

Halfway between the zenith and the horizon
A narrow cloud extends all bloody red,
Like outstretched arms at time of evening benizon
From lips of veilèd god—and merited.

Oh, little wonder some men worship thee—great sun!
Thou source of countless blessings to mankind.
I hail thy wondrous beauty ere thy course is run,
With not a little profit to my mind.

Still wheel the birds above the good ship's foaming wake,
But black as crows seen 'gainst the blazing sky;
Within the disc from time to time their forms they slake,
To vision lost as in the flames they fly.

Bathed in the solar flood each sail and rope and spar
Uprear like cords and sheets of yellow fire,
And cast gigantic shadows on the course afar—
As if to guide the helmsman they desire.

And thus sails on the ship! Abaft a path of light;
Before, a path of shade-waves grey and dark,
As from the sinking sun t'wards Ind she wings her flight.
Ho! for the dancing waves and rolling bark.

Less blazing grows the west as day's orb dips his rim
And veils his face enough for human eye;
Down, and still down! behind the dark'ning brim—
Oh, wondrous changes of the sea and sky!

In robe of darkest purple rolls the sea behind
'Neath crimson sky that shades to bluish grey,
And faintly seen the evening star I find—
A chamber-light where sleeps the god of day.

The yellow flame now dies from off the spars and sails,
And all aloft puts on a dull array:
Where gladness *was* is sadness which awhile prevails,
For mind and heart become its willing prey.

Coolness is in the air—it seems apology;
Dampness is also there—men's charity;
It breathes a fitful moan—some men's doxology:
It comes in puffs—like popularity.

Now tinkle, tinkle! goes the steward's merry bell.
Mirth we unbind and jokes go wildly free.
What care we if we hear what we can better tell?
Thank God for ships! Thank God for life at sea!

IV.

MIDNIGHT.

The wind has ceased to blow its shrilly fife aloft ;
The piper, weary, heaves but fitful sighs
Like to a sleeping infant's breathing, low and soft—
The ship no longer with the sea-fowl vies.

As 't were a creeping phantom goes she slowly on,
The silent burden of a silent sea ;
With flattened sails she seems a tall automaton—
In stately measure moves her dignity.

Like two bright gems in oaken setting on her sides
The starboard and the larboard lights outshine,
A ruby and an emerald, which as she glides
Reflect and quiver in the passing brine.

Distinct appear her rails where rests the shining dew,
Save where the blackened shadows fall and lie ;
Like pencils slowly scribbling on a sheet of blue
Her swaying topmasts move against the sky.

The mistless moon, a silver-vested queen, sinks west—
With rounded eye she gazes on the deep,
Which bright as silver shimmers where her footsteps rest
And where her trailing garments lightly sweep.

The sails and spars reflect, and ghost-like shadows cast.
The moon an artist is in black and white—
So weird her work, the timid stand and gaze aghast,
Till reason their mentality munite.

Peace reigns on deck, peace reigns aloft and down below—
A sense of peace steals over heart and mind,
Which fills them both with kindly thoughts which overflow
In tenderness to folly-struck mankind.

The hush of peace broods o'er the rolling ocean's breast,
Pervades the broad blue vault of heaven above;
And from the stars looks down as if to manifest
That God desires a universal love.

Oh, beauteous night! How eloquent thy quietness!
And how majestic is thy temple's space!
The world seems not, *is* not so sadly fatherless—
Some love within thy sacred walls I trace.

Oh, would to God this witching calm might last for e'er!
As darkness shall when Sol 's consumed his light.
Alas! round goes the earth. Before the morning glare
Away you 'll flee, sweet Spirit of the Night!

Such is the world, and such is checkered human life,
That pain and sadness tread the heels of joy.
Clang! Clang! the midnight bell cuts like a brazen knife;
And hoarsely calls the boatswain, "Watch ahoy!"

THE DEMON AND THE DERELICT

A superstition once widely spread still lingers here and there in the minds of seamen. An abandoned ship is believed to be taken possession of, and guided by, a demon bent on mischief. This I have connected with the mysterious loss of the ship *City of Boston*, which sailed from Halifax, N.S., for England many years ago, and was never afterwards heard of.

I.

THE proud four-master *Kennebec* past San Domingo swept,
And, by the shores of Hayti, east her stately course she kept.
The turquoise-like Caribbean Sea lay rolling far behind—
To-morrow Mona Passage would if wind continued kind.
Oh, the waters rippled gaily!
They had rippled gaily daily
Since the *Kennebec* weighed anchor,
And with topsails, jib, and spanker
Put out of San Juan de Nicaragua.

The stately, queenly *Kennebec* was neat from truck to keel;
As graceful as a swan she moved responsive to her wheel.
Mahogany and sandalwood were stowed away below:
In perfect trim she courted wind and longed to feel it blow
With her canvas swelling grandly!—
The wind had blown too blandly
From the night she weighed her anchor,
And with topsails, jib, and spanker
Sailed out of San Juan de Nicaragua.

But soon the wind was hot and faint—it hotter, fainter grew,
Till the crew declared a hotter night at sea they never knew.
Then the waters ceased to ripple, and appeared as molten lead,
And the thirty sails hung motionless among the rigging dead.
The crescent seemed to quiver
Like reflection in a river.
Though strange it was, and stranger,
There was not a thought of danger
On board the ship that sailed from Nicaragua.

A squall swept on the *Kennebec*; the seamen ran amast:
The tail of the Caribbean was lashed to foam so fast
Amazement and confusion took possession of her crew;
The Captain called in terror, and the boatswain's whistle blew.
With her canvas rent and rending,
And her spars to leeward bending,
The *Kennebec* was blasted
And became a wreck dismasted
Six days from San Juan de Nicaragua.

The *Kennebec*, tornado-struck, with all her beauty lowered,
Was shivered through and leaky, and the water freely poured.
Mahogany and sandalwood had shifted down below;
No time was there for wasting, so the boats must over go
As the ship was rolling madly
Abandoned was she gladly;
And as the crew departed
From the sea the Demon started.
Farewell to San Juan de Nicaragua!

He trod with glee the reeling wreck, and grinned from ear
to ear.
" A goodly craft is this," said he, " to play the Buccaneer."
Then paced he wildly to and fro, and paced from side to
side,
And softly chuckled when he saw how rapid was the tide.
With the Mona Passage frantic
As a winter-tossed Atlantic,
And a darkness to be felt,
What terror might be dealt
In silence by the hulk from Nicaragua!

The demon-guided *Kennebec*, with trailing rope and mast,
Swept westwards on the current, and the Isle of Hayti
passed.
As, like a lurking devil-fish, she fled the open east,
She waited for her victims like a jungle-hidden beast.
'Mid the mist and gloom of ocean
And for e'er and e'er in motion,
A derelict and demon
Keep in terror hardy seamen,
As turtles are in terror of a jaguar.

Between the Isle of Cuba and the coast of Yucatan,
Thence round the Gulf of Mexico the ship and demon ran:
And the demon cowered shyly during weather warm and
bright,
But he gambolled like a kitten in the darkness of the night;
And when the sky was clouded
And the orbs of heaven shrouded,
Like a ballet-dancer he
While he tittered in his glee
On the wreck that sailed in pride from Nicaragua.

Along the coast of Florida, past Great Bahama Isle,
The *Kennebec* went slowly like a lazy crocodile;
By the moonlight and the sunlight was the demon's scheming foiled,
And the waters lay as smooth as if the ocean had been oiled.
Ship after ship went past her
Eluding all disaster,
Till the spirit who commanded
Would have gladly seen her stranded
Or back in San Juan de Nicaragua.

"I'll leave these sunny regions" to himself he muttered low;
"Ho! for the roaring forties* and the northern wind and snow,
Where the mists in masses gather on the billows feather white,
And the breaking waters thunder on the decks by day and night.
Aye! let the north be chosen,
Where the look-out men are frozen:
Where the passengers dissembling
Try in vain to hide their trembling.
To the north must go the ship from Nicaragua!"

At length within the latitudes where winter fury pours
Midway 'twixt Nova Scotia and the billow-lashed Azores,
Within a misty region under rule of fog and night,
Like a deadly cobra lurking, lay the wand'rer out of sight:
And the shifting logs below
Moved thumping to and fro,
While from stem to stern she trembled
And a living thing resembled
With a heart of wood from sunny Nicaragua.

* The stormiest portion of the Atlantic.

II.

From Halifax a stately ship of queenly mien and mould,
Set out on her majestic way amidst the wind and cold:
She weighed her pond'rous anchors as the clocks were striking ten—
Her name the *Boston City*, and her crew were Englishmen.
Five hundred hearts were throbbing,
And some tender women sobbing:
Farewells their hearts were rending,
But no thought of what was pending—
No dream had they of wrecks from Nicaragua!

'Neath a leaden-clouded heaven—o'er a dark grey ocean's breast—
Onwards! like a mighty athlete did she with the billows wrest.
Thrice the forms of dark and daylight stalked across the ocean's face
And beheld her speeding eastwards with a frightened greyhound's pace.
Brave her Captain was and cheery,
Watchful was he and unweary,
Never missed the watch-bell's tolling
As the *Boston City* rolling
Drew nearer to the wreck from Nicaragua.

When the fourth night drew her curtains, heavy were the winds and sea,
And the storm fiend sat and whistled 'midst the rigging in his glee;

While below with mirth and music merry hearts gave wings
to time,
Listened to the singer's music and the poet's merry
rhyme.
Now and then the waves' dull thunder
Seemed to rend the decks asunder—
Rang out like a solemn knell
From a speaking muffled bell—
Beware!—beware of her from Nicaragua!

Eight-bells struck the hour of midnight. "*Larboard watch
ahoy!—ahoy!*"
On the *Kennebec* the demon heard and chuckled in his joy.
For the wreck in mist enveloped, human eyes were all in vain;
And the *Boston City's* boastwain ne'er would call the watch
again.
Crash! and awful cry—"Collision!"
Vain the Captain's cool decision,
Vain the efforts of the seamen—
Loud the laughter of the demon
On board the hulk from sunny Nicaragua!

Terror, like a whelming torrent, swept the *Boston City*
through:
Trembling men and shrieking women mingled with her
striving crew.
"Low'r the boats! Look sharp!—Stand back, there!—
Sinking! Sinking!—No!—You lie!"
Not a man and not a woman but was doomed that night to
die!
Swift the inward flow of waters—
Fierce collision's awful daughters!
None to aid her, none to pity,
Down! down sank the *Boston City*
Far beneath the wreck from Nicaragua!

MAKING THE HARBOUR LIGHT

INTO the night without a star,
Into the driving cloud—
Up where the fiends of the tempest are
Tower the mast and shroud!
Whee-ewe! whistles the winter wind—
Ewe-ee—whee-ee—ee-ewe!
The snow-flakes fiercely drive, and blind
The eyes of the freezing crew;
They melt on the planks of the reeling deck,
And pile on the rolling rails;
We see them whirl where the lanterns fleck,
And cling to the stretching sails—
While the ship goes trembling up,
And the ship goes plunging down,
And the inky seas to windwards tup
And over to leeward frown.

The look-out man by the bowsprit stands,
(A stoic at heart is he)
Pocketed deep are his horny hands—
'T is little that he can see!
The melting snow from his oilskin drips
With the drip of the driving spray.
'T is his to search for the rocks and ships
That lie in the helmsman's way;

To watch for the beam of the moving light
And the shade of the booming sail
That come like ghosts, on a misty night,
And gallop before the gale.
Loudly whistles the biting wind
That carries the broken foam:
It puckers his face and is most unkind
But it speaks of a welcome home.

The light in the binnacle dimly rays—
Looks up in the helmsman's eyes,
And he looks down with a steady gaze
That the swings of the card defies.
The rim of his slouched sou'-wester glows,
And the tan of his hardened cheek:
The skipper's order is all he knows,
And the wheel's responsive creak.
The cold may cut and the storm assail,
(The lot of a tar is hard)
But he meets the blows of the driving gale
As stern as a Roman guard.
He "feels" the shake of the topsail leech,
Though out of a mortal's sight,
And spins the wheel with a grasping reach
Till the "fill" of the sail is right.

There's a sound aloft as of distant drums
That are beaten around the dead,
And the straining stay of the staysail thrums
And quivers the foremast head.
Whee-ewe! whistles the rushing wind,
Ee-ewe—whee-ee—ewe-ee!
And passes away with a moan behind
On the groan of the seething sea.

Now thick as a hedge the flying fog
  Rolls over the foaming brine;
And the faithful cowering sailor's dog
  Awakens from sleep to whine—
He knows we are near the land,
  And he knows we are nearing home;
But nothing is seen on either hand,
  And the night is fierce and lone.

The sailor-boy is as pale as death
  With a mixture of fear and cold:
By chatt'ring teeth and uncertain breath
  The tale of his woe is told,
And he clings with a chilly hand
  To a rope at the windward rail—
He 's so fatigued he can scarcely stand
  In the gusts of the smiting gale.
In a drowsy dream the dancing flame
  Shines over a humble hearth;
He sees the face of a grey-haired dame,
  The dearest of all on earth:
And fainter visions are conjured up
  From the depth of the sailor-mind—
The seamen sit with their wives to sup
  And their wives are wondrous kind.

Now—now their children around them flock,
  And merry the children seem;
They see the face of the wakeful clock—
  It catches the embers' beam:
The tend'rest eyes in the wide, wide earth
  Look into the sailors' own;
They feel the warmth, and they know the worth
  Of the sights and sounds of home.

Now quicker and quicker the pulses beat
As though at a glad surprise—
The lips of the wife and the husband meet,
And the mariner softly sighs.
Whee-ewe! leeward the spars are borne—
And the shivering boy and crew
By a dash of spray are made forlorn—
Their visions all fade from view!

Up in the night without a star,
Up in the driving cloud,
Up where the fiends of the tempest are
Stagger the mast and shroud!
Wildly whistles the winter wind—
Ee-ewe—whee-ee—ewe-ee!
Like silver flashes the foam behind
Where the vessel has ploughed the sea,
While every man at his station stands
Awaiting the skipper's call
With willingmost heart and promptest hands
To battle the fitful squall.
As weathered as rock he stands to peer
As into the drift he 's borne,
Without a shadow of craven fear—
As tough as a bullock's horn!

As nought to him are the wind and cold,
As nought are the snow and gloom;
He wills his ship to the wind to hold
As stiff as the creaking boom.
She seems to fathom his iron mind—
The weather-beat oaken ship
Whose rudder and wind-strained canvas bind
The course in a bear-like grip.

The straining mizzenmast shrouds he holds,
And studies the passing night
Without fatigue till his eye beholds
The flash of the harbour light.
The loud *boom-oom !* of the breakers' bray
Is heard on the jagged rocks,
And the fierce *swee-ish !* of the flying spray
That the struggling vessel mocks.

His mouth is set and his brows are knit,
And strained are the eye and ear,
The whirling snow-flakes flutter and flit,
And the channel is very near.
The trusty crew and the faithful dog
Are held in the master's hand
As on we go through the snow and fog,
And in for the harbour stand.
No voice but his on the silence breaks,
And the mariner's low "Aye, aye."
Though masters many have made mistakes,
The souls of the sailors say—
He rules his nerves, and he rules his crew
As he governs the helm and sail,
And sure we are he will put her through
In spite of the gloom and gale !

All eyes are strained for the harbour light—
We know it must soon be seen.
A glimmer—a flash ! and the dreary night
Is lit with its cheerful beam.
We hail it all with a hearty cheer,
Three points on the weather bow—
Now boldly in may the helmsman steer,
Though hidden the rocky brow.

Now flashes it white, and now blood red
As rapidly sweeps the barque.
'T was truth the soul of the sailor said
In spite of the storm and dark!
The captain's brow is no longer knit,
And his lips assume a smile.
The lighthouse-keeper perceives us flit
On the final and harbour mile.

Whee-ewe!—mad are the wind and sleet!
The tone of the skipper is glee—
"Ease off, ease off the spanker sheet!
Hard up the helm and keep her free!"
With merriest rattle the sheets fly out,
And a booming is heard o'erhead;
We rapidly travel the land-locked route
And the toss of the seas have sped.
The glimmering windows of home we see,
And the weather-beat canvas furl—
So-ho! for the fireside jubilee,
Where flames of the pine logs curl.
Now merrily, merrily "round we to"
Forgetting the storm and snow—
The captain laughs, and the hardy crew,
As over the anchors go.

THE SONG OF THE ICEBERG

INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

The travels of Nansen and others in Greenland have shown that a huge ice-cap covers the interior, like a frozen deluge, at an elevation of from 6000 to 10,000 feet, broken here and there by protruding mountain tops. This ever-growing mass thrusts the glaciers seawards along the ice fjords till they break into gigantic blocks and plunge into Baffin's Bay, to drift slowly southwards through Davis' Strait, and thence along the coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland. Thus originates the wanderin iceberg of the North Atlantic.

DOWN—down in the realms of the boreal pole,
Deep—deep in the region of storm,
Down—down where the Pole-star is well overhead,
The heavens a circle perform;
And there, on a bosom granitic that frowns
On the ice-fjords that glitter below,
Ten thousand feet up in continuous frost
And 'mid the continuous snow
(Where the Goddess Aurora sits shaking her fan
In the face of a vapourless moon—
Where the sun circles round for the half of the year
And is cold—like a yellow balloon)
Resides a dumb spirit of terrible toil,
Who is working by night and by day,
Who entered on work at the dawning of time
To continue it ever and aye!

That spirit no mortal has ever beheld—
No mortal shall ever behold!
At a mortal's approach his invisible robes
The form of the spirit enfold,
Composed of a fabric of bitterest frost
From the loom of the axis of earth
Which silently works in the mill of the winds
Unsullied by sorrow or mirth.
In anger are shaken the measureless skirts
And the withering blizzard uplifts:
Then stiff in the snow lies the form of the foe
The victim of smothering drifts.
Thus—thus it has happened—shall happen again!
When adventurous mortals shall go
Ten thousand feet up where perpetual frost
Sweeps over perpetual snow.

The spirit of toil has for ever produced
(And production shall ever go on,
The ice-cap reducing but never reduced)
What the glacier is suckled upon.
In the fjord that infant gigantic has lain
Eternally growing—to grow:
Through ages unnumbered his foregoing train
Has been flowing and ever shall flow
To the waiting embrace of the blue Baffin's Bay,
And the current that flows from the pole—
Where out of the zenith Polaris' ray
Gives light to no mariner's soul.
I am one of the train that in collocate course
Stole outwards to Baffin's embrace.
The Fjord's my mother, my father is Force—
I resemble my father in face.

Yes! I came from the bosom granitic that frowns
On my mother that glitters below—
The region the ice-cap eternally crowns,
Which is clothed in a mantle of snow.
Above me Aurora has shaken her fan
In the face of a vapourless moon,
And the sun has wheeled round me through half of the year,
While Boreas blew the bassoon.
I have seen the dumb spirit of terrible toil,
I have felt him by night and by day:
As calm as Polaris he's never accoil—
He's a god! and for ever and aye.
Ho-ho! for the glories that dwell in the north,
Where a night and a day are a year,
And the stars which look down upon man in the south
Can never for ever appear!

I came through the centuries down to the sea
In my mother's cold, rocky embrace;
I cared not a snow-flake for what was to be,
And my father decided the pace.
I needed no compass, I needed no chart,
Though I journeyed where ledges abound;
I saw the sun come, and I saw it depart,
And the stars in their courses go round:
But I reckoned not time like the mortals who live
At the tips of the fingers of death
(The mortals who wrong but who cannot forgive),
And who perish for want of a breath.
When the Spirit shakes out from his vesture the frost,
And the withering blizzard uplifts,
The boldest "Ha-ha!" is bewildered and lost,
And blind to the beauty of drifts.

Oh, well I remember the day that I first
  Plunged into the indigo sea!
With a sound as of thunder I suddenly burst
  From the arms of my mother—was free!
Then wildly I frolicked!—and maddened with joy
  I tossed all around me the sprays
Till I fitted the folds of the blue bavaroy,
  And sat like the Ancient of Days.
How the echoes repeated the sound of my voice,
  And the fjord re-echoed with glee,
While Baffin rose round me to wildly rejoice
  And beat the bass-drum of the sea!
My immaculate brow, with nobility crowned,
  Looked down to the depths of the deep:
Beneath and above me I saw the profound
  And both of them quiet as sleep.

For weeks was the coming of wind deterred
  And the heaven was blue and fair,
While the antics I watched of the walrus herd
  And the wandering polar bear:
And I felt the touch of the pond'rous whale
  That swam in the depths below—
I saw the sweep of his muscular tail
  As he sped to the top to blow.
The feather-clad tribes of the northern seas
  Were winging on sea and shore,
But never a ripple! and never a breeze!
  And never a breaker's roar!
The sweetest of peace in the north is found—
  In the region that men call drear,
Where stars go travelling round and round
  The whole of the speeding year.

The muscular steed of the polar tide
Came cantering down the bay,
And the north wind bade me to mount and ride—
So I mounted and came away!
While the sea-fowl circled around in flocks
Where the towering cliffs engrail,
The snowy-white fox on the jagged rocks
Stood wagging his bushy tail,
And he barked a sort of a short "good-bye!"
When he knew I was riding south,
And I saw him friskily shorewards hie
As he panted with open mouth.
On the outmost point of an upthrust reef
Where the treach'rous currents run
I saw him standing in sharp relief
In the light of the midnight sun.

I saw my mother behind me stand
In her garments of white and blue,
With a precipice naked on either hand
And her offspring issuing through.
Her face in the distance fade, I saw,
Just under the hornèd moon,
But I felt no pang for a moment gnaw
For the loss of my greatest boon.
Behind me followed the seals in herds
And they croaked in their wild delight,
While all around and above the birds
Kept answering day and night.
I heard the billows around me roar
And *swish!* as their caps they threw;
While merrily, merrily, more and more
The boreal bellows blew.

As farther from zenith Polaris sailed
Deep into the fading north,
The stars I never before had hailed
From out of the sea came forth.
I saw the island of Disco lift
Unsullied its robe of snow,
And shake a kerchief of gauzy drift
Whenever the wind did blow.
Amid the waters of Davis' Strait
The fun of my flight began—
I saw the form and the awkward gait
Of the two-legged animal man.
Some specimens crawled from a curious hole
That peeped from a sheltered shore—
My merriment breaking beyond control
I laughed till my sides were sore.

Then he who under the Pole-star stood
Outpuffing the bellows' breath,
Began to fail in his lustyhood—
Becoming as still as death!
But the boreal steed on the southward road
Has never been known to rest,
(The owner attends with a sharpened goad
And is never in mood to jest),
So whether the winds be high or low,
Be powerless or be strong
I heed but little. The tide *must* flow
And my journeying south prolong!
If all the billows from Belle Isle Strait
To water-worn Cape Farewell
Were wind-reversed to compel me wait,
They couldn't transgress the spell!

For weeks I travelled through restless floes
And they parted to give me room,
Till Labrador from the waters rose
In the light of the stars and moon.
I thought of my home, for it looked as fair
As merrily past I ran:
But I felt the loss of my native air
When its southerly wind began.
Then gathering mists on the waters rose
And scudded before the breeze—
They veiled the forms of the snow-white floes
And the face of the darkened seas!
The lowering moon and the rising sun
Were smothered to death by fog!
No sound I heard but the breakers' run
And the howl of a straying dog.

Then fishermen's schooners with dripping sail
Like wandering ghosts went by,
And I heard the fishers the fog bewail
And pray for a sunlit sky.
Then one to another a greeting sent
Because they were so forlorn—
The sorrows of men, it seemed, were blent
With the sound of the lusty horn.
When night had settled and all was black
There mingled a cry of woe—
A schooner had suffered her stem to crack
At the tap of a baby floe:
But whether or not she kept afloat
I cannot pretend to say—
I heard the splash of a falling boat
And I know that it rowed away.

The bellowing tones of the fog-trump's breath—
  Swelled out from the Belle Isle shore;
It seemed the cry of the fear of death—
  Of a monster cast ashore
Who yelled imploring for leave to live
  With permission but once to cry.
The devil, I trow, such a yell might give
  If he were decreed to die.
It seemed to frighten the world of mist
  And the fisher-craft far and wide:
At any rate, fishermen stopped to list,
  And spoke of the wind and tide,
Then hastily turned their craft about
  And headed them out to sea.
In terror they cried "Look out—look out!"
  On catching a glimpse of me.

The longest night to a close shall tend
  As long as the world goes round,
And even a southerly wind must end—
  Must set to its life a bound.
That wind had travelled for weeks, I trow,
  To gather its heat and wet;
No wonder that even an iceberg's brow
  Should know what it is to sweat!
It fainter grew till at last it died—
  I wish it a lengthy rest.
Right glad was I and my steed the tide
  Of a gale from the west-north-west;
When morning broke and the sun upshot
  It couldn't be seen till noon,
And *then* 't was only a rounded spot,
  And looked like a misted moon.

At length the masses of drifting mist
Were made to withdraw their pall—
The west-north-west is an exorcist
Who severs the fog-fiend thrall!
To leeward at length like a mountain chain
The flyaway fog-bank lay,
And a mile or two off on the sunlit main
It basked in the solar ray.
A ship burst out of the rolling mist
Full into the golden haze,
With a thousand men on her deck, I wist,
Who wondering stood to gaze.
She lingered there in her beauty clad,
And a mariner heaved the lead.
With a *toot!*—as if I had made her mad—
She turned on her keel and fled.

'T was lucky for her that the south wind failed
And the pall of the fog withdrew,
That her captain his reckoning overhaled—
And lucky for all her crew,
For they might have followed the men and ships
That lie on the leagues of sand
Where many a traveller treasure grips,
But never shall see the land!
The mariners' terror am I, I know,
When the weather is thick and dank,
When sultry southerly breezes blow
From over the sea-merged Bank
Whose sands could many a ghastly tale
To horrified men unfold,
Of bergs! and wrecks! and the roaring gale!—
Ah, never shall they be told!

Ho-ho! and Ho-ho! to the southward I go—
  As free as the eagle's wing!
King North's accredited nuncio
  To the court of the reigning Spring!
With the blue below me, the blue above,
  And my glistening robes of white,
In a mingling measure of fear and love
  Men look at me day or night,
And they pass me by with relief of mind
  As they travel the heaving main:
Though casting a lingering look behind,
  They hope for me never again!
When seen at night by the stars' dim light,
  Or the horned moon's feeble ray,
Men wake in a fright from their dreams that night
  And pray for the break of day.

I shall never return to the boreal Pole—
  To the frost-governed region of storm!
With a destiny such as I cannot control,
  To a death in the south I am borne.
I carry my beauty and purity on
  Till majesty, terror, and might
Have melted to tears and are withered and gone
  Like a beautiful vision of night.
I shall fade from the face of my well-beloved brine—
  Be absorbed in the bosoms of waves
(As men disappear from the ocean of Time,
  And lie in their billow-like graves).
The earth and its glories shall follow my fate,
  For a destiny bears them along;
And passionate loving and passionate hate
  Shall die like the snatch of a song.

THE FULL-RIGGED SHIP "*CENTURION*"

A BALLAD.

I.

WHERE quaint Quebec's historic cliffs
Upon the rver frown,
The full-rigged ship *Centurion*
I saw with anchor down.
No fairer ship or stronger ship
The blue St. Laurence sailed;
'T was at Quebec the ship was built
And from Quebec she hailed.
All ready for her maiden trip,
The whistling winds and spray,
And basking in the setting sun
She timber-laden lay;
While men and women, girls and boys
Looked out with pride upon
The oaken hull and stately spars
Of the *Centurion.*

I met the Captain on the quay—
A swarthy man was he—
And with him walked his bonnie bride:
Both good and fair was she.

He married her the day the ship
  Divorced herself from shore.
"The wedding should," the folk declared,
  "Be after or before.
Unlucky 't was to have at once
  A launch and wedding-day."
But Captain Jacques he only winked,
  And gaily answered "Nay!—
With double luck in ship and wife
  My double course I 'll steer."
His wine he quaffed, and loudly laughed
  To calm the maiden's fear.

When from the river's bank the ship
  Leaped on the river's breast,
The bride it was who cut the cord
  At Captain Jacques' behest—
Who cut the cord and broke the flask
  And spilt the wine upon
The noble bows, and laughing cried
  "Success, *Centurion!*"
Right loudly did the neighbours cheer
  To see the vessel glide:
"A beauty is the ship," said they;
  "A beauty is the bride."
Some aged sailors crossed themselves
  By way of counter-charm;
"God keep," said they, "this bonnie ship
  And bonnie bride from harm!"

II.

"When, Captain Jacques—when sails the ship?"
"At daylight," he replied—
"The wind is light, so I shall wait
To catch the ebbing tide.
And with me goes my winsome wife—
We sail for sunny Spain.
'T is right that she who named the ship
Should sail the breezy main."
The girlish cheeks assumed a blush,
Her lips a smile revealed,
The woman's heart within the bride
Refused to be concealed.
She like a tender lily was,
And he a sturdy fir:
Oh, proud was she of Captain Jacques!
And proud was he of her!

At break of day, on ebbing tide,
With swelling canvas spread,
The full-rigged ship *Centurion*
The blue St Laurence fled:
The towns and hamlets, hills and dales
Behind her sped away
As flee the scenes we see in dreams
Before the dawning day.
The river-water rippled past
And played a merry tune:
Aloft a sound was heard that seemed
The hum of bees in June:

And gaily sped she all the day
And gaily all the night,
Till distance dimmed the river banks
And hid them both from sight.

The wind veered round to west-by-north,
More briskly blew the gale,
And fast and faster fled the ship
And lessened not her sail.
The ships she sighted—every one—
She overtook and passed!
The sailors wondered as she went
Because she went so fast.
As others madly rolled and plunged
She seemed to gaily skip;
And ancient mariners exclaimed
"There goes the phantom ship!"
While younger Jacks who phantoms scoffed
But watched her as she fled
Declared, "If that's a lucky ship
Then Davy Jones is dead!"

In forty-two west longitude,
A barque, the *Samarcand*,
Was under shortened canvas on
The Banks of Newfoundland.
When through the fog there burst a ship
No sooner seen than gone:
The crew upon her quarter read
The word *Centurion*.
And as she passed amid the mist
The men could plainly trace
A woman on the quarter-deck
With terror on her face—

Who held her hands imploringly
  Towards the *Samarcand!*
And things there were about that ship
  They could not understand.

Though fiercely blew the piping gale,
  Though high the seas she met,
She bore a cloud of canvas and
  Had both her sky-sails set!
While try-sail, jib, and topsails were
  The most that *they* could stand,
Those brave and skilful mariners
  On board the *Samarcand.*
The helmsman was the only man
  That any eye could see,
And dimly seen amid the mist
  He crazy seemed to be.
Though time was on the stroke of noon
  She showed her starboard light—
The woman with imploring hands
  Was dressed in bridal white!

III.

A dreary week of rain and storm
  Sped over quaint Quebec,
And of the launch and wedding-day
  The folk had ceased to reck.
The wind was from the east-by-north
  When up the river came
A barque from off whose mainmast truck
  There streamed a scarlet name.

With hull and canvas sun-bedecked
A cheerful sight was she,
And cheerful were the men on board,
As everyone could see.
The purple haze of eventide
Had fallen on the land:
It seemed that into Paradise
Had sailed the *Samarcand.*

I met the Captain on the quay
On which with Jacques I met;
He took me by the arm and said
"Let us the whistle wet:"
And in the Cafè Fleur de Lis
He smoked and told the tale
Concerning the *Centurion,*
The woman and the gale.
Among the group that gathered round
And heard with bated breath
Were some who saw the launch, and they
Became as pale as death!
Again those sailors crossed themselves
By way of counter-charm:
"God keep," said they, "the cursèd ship,
And bonnie bride from harm!"

Soon through the streets and o'er the quays
The group of men were gone—
Then all the town began to talk
Of the *Centurion;*
And some there were who shook their heads,
And some there were who smiled,
But *two* there were who wept and said,
"Alas! Alas! my child!"

Through dreary weeks and weary months
They watched St. Laurence' tide:
The bridegroom never came again
And never came the bride!
Two whitened heads more whitened grew
And then they passed away:
She closed her eyes on Christmas-eve
And *he* on Christmas-day.

A wild and dark December night
Broke on the coast of Spain,
And in the gloom, within the storm,
Beneath the blinding rain,
Against the cliff on crest of which
Shone out a beacon's glare,
A timber-laden derelict
Was dashed on Finisterre!
It was the four and twentieth,
And through ensuing day
The wreckage drifted off the cape
And into Biscay Bay.
The dark-eyed Spanish sailors,
When the storm was passed and gone,
On portions of the wreckage read
The word *Centurion.*

IN THE CLEFT OF A ROCK

I.

'NEATH a weather-worn rock with a water-worn
base,
That faces the glorious sea
With a sort of grimace on its fissure-torn face
(A volcanical Grecian ogee),
Where the side has been split for a muser to sit—
Kind act of an affable elf—
Having bidden my fret and my worry to flit,
I muse with my soul and myself.
I listen with joy to the sound of the surf
And its cadence pathetic and slow
While I lie on a couch with a cushion of turf
And in sight of the billows below.

Like the bend of a bow, when the weapon is strung,
The sweep of the glistering sand
By the well-furrowed walls of the cliffs overhung
And the smile of the blossoming land.
The "Pee-wit-weet, pee-weet" of the lapwing is heard
And the wheat-ear's "Tchk-tchk-chico-chick,"
While the wind blows a bass to the song of the bird
Where the gorse and its blossoms are thick.
Though sweet the delights o'er the crest of the hill,
Of the bird and the blossoming flow'r,
They're void of the power and lacking in skill
To provide me the joy of the hour.

My soul is in love with the blue and the white
That freckle the face of the deep.
Oh, I feel the content of a true eremite
And a devotee's vigil I keep
As I ponder the beauty that covers the main
Like a veil on a beautiful bride!
As a groom in his love looks again and again,
I look on the flow of the tide.
While I bathe in a joy which I cannot propound,
I am happy to feel it is mine;
And it tenants my life to its uttermost bound
As the spirit intenants the wine.

Each inrolling wave is a poem sublime,
And the grace of its motion a balm.
In the boom and the crash of the galloping brine
I hear the loud swell of a psalm;
And the rattle and rush of the shingle and sand
In the billow's retreat from the shore
Are as when, in a temple unspeakably grand,
A multitude bend and adore;
But the hush that ensues in a chancel and nave
Is scarcely as solemn to me
As the stillness that follows the fall of a wave
Ere another breaks out of the sea.

Like a body of cavalry uniformed blue
With white for the uniform-crest,
In the stately advance of the pomp of review
And the line of a thousand abreast,
The chargers come on in their beauty and pride—
The van of the militant deep:

Oh, stirring indeed is the manner they ride
And noble the order they keep!
A trumpeting blast gives the order to charge—
And they charge like the French at Sedan
On the well-wetted breast of the water-worn marge,
With defeat for the fruit of the plan.

With a boom as of thunder they close with the foe—
The steady incline of the strand;
With a whirl and a hiss they are broken to snow
On the ranks of the pebbles and sand.
The sights and the sounds of advance and retreat
Awaken my soul-of-the-boy;
And something of bitterness passingly sweet—
A mixture of sorrow and joy—
Comes out like to waves from the sea of the past
To the cavernous region of sighs
Which borders the shore of the heart—and which cast
Their spray in my sorrowing eyes.

Oh! is it because of the sorrowful sound
And the spray that has blinded my sight,
That I fancy the voices long silent resound
From the shore of eternity's night?
Ah, surely I see on the sweep of the beach
A group of undisciplined boys
Who follow a wave to its farthest outreach
With the mirth of exuberant joys!
And is it their shouting—(the rollicking set!)
Which comes on the swell of the breeze?—
Alas! they are fishermen dragging a net
From the grasp of the damaging seas.

And the voices I heard with such rapturous thrills
Were only the voices of birds!
(With fallacies Fancy each faculty fills—
With a halo the senses engirds).
The sea-mews are calling in fluttering flight,
And they swoop in their freedom and glee—
They flash in the sun as if silver-bedight
As they follow the fish of the sea.
They flirt with the foam on the hastening waves,
They call as if urchins at play:
Their voices find echoes in memory's caves
As sad as a burial lay!

II.

I see in the offing the spectre-like sail
Of a ship as she hastens along;
She seems to rejoice in the grasp of the gale,
And to dance to a mariner's song.
As a speck she appears, passing by and away—
To the ocean a trivial thing;
A thousand have passed in the course of the day—
She is nought but the flap of a wing!
To the passionless sea shall the bird and the ship
But a ripple a moment bequest;
They drift on its breast like a feather and chip—
They come and depart as the rest.

The ship to the sailor is centre of all,
Majestic and mighty she seems:
Conviction is such that it holds him in thrall
As a sleeper is held in his dreams.

'T is thus that the best of us passes through life
In the ship of a petty conceit—
(The parent prolific of anger and strife)
Forgetting the size of the fleet.
The parson exhorts, the philosopher smiles—
Exhorting and smiling are vain;
The ship will continue to measure her miles
In a spot of the measureless main.

Though some of the crew may ascend to the truck
And look through a powerful glass,
'T is rarely we find that a man has the luck
To see he should study the ass.
Such wisdom is rarely acquired in time
Till ships are ashore and awreck,
And never unless we can patiently climb
And laugh at the strutters on deck.
"Pee-wit-weet, pee-weet!"—Ah! the lapwing again,
A health to you, twittering friend!
There 's wisdom, I trow, in your sweet little strain,
For it has a beginning and end.

I thank you for cutting the thread of my thought
With a snip of your scissors-like bill,
For why should my mind with a thinking be fraught
Of men's indefectible ill?
What is, ever was, and it ever shall be
In the home of the knave and the fool—
When the ear is grown dull and the eye cannot see
'T is late to be talking of school.
Thank God for the sea and the thought *I am free!*
For the air as refreshing as wine!
Man's folly may go to the deep of the sea
As long as such blessings are mine.

III.

Ho! Ho!—what is it I see in the Bay
  Where dizzily glittering run
The billows that play in the glare of the day
  Just under the rolling sun—
Where gulls are uttering sated wails
  And the buoy of the herring-net floats?—
The red and the brown of the fishermen's sails
  Swell over the galloping boats.
Ho! rapidly nearer the herring-men draw—
  The work of the fishing is done.
Their courses are steered without sign of a yaw
  As they speed on the homeward run.

The picturesque garb of the fishermen peeps
  From over the rollicking rails;
Right merry the men, for glittering heaps
  Lie under the bellying sails.
The foam that kisses the travelling sides
  Is as white as the driving snow,
Till into the wake of the fleet it glides
  To borrow a golden glow.
Hurrah —say I, for the weather-beat boats
  Of the weather-beat sturdy men—
For every patch on the well-patched coats.
  (The women would say *Amen.*)

As merry as reapers forsaking a field
In the light of a rounded moon,
When sowing and reaping have given a yield
The farmer considers a boon,
They carry the wheat of the riotous seas,
They ride on the furrowing ploughs—
The snort of the steed is the puff of the breeze
And the share is the share of the bows.
They merrily laugh at a sip of the sin
That is known as a fisherman's lie.
A fisherman's tale is the flap of a fin,
And is heard with a twinkle-lit eye.

IV.

The steeds of the tide have sped up to the cliff
And their bodies are covered in foam,
So I must dismount from my mind's hippogriff
And abandon my musing for home.
Reluctant I leave, like a lover who goes
From the side of the maid of his choice,
By whom he is held with a cord actuose
Spun out of her beauty and voice.
But when I 'm away from the sound and the sight
They 'll draw with a multiple chain—
I 'll come on the steed of a dream of the night
To revel again and again!

How rapid is time when the mind is in flight
Untrammelled by carnal decree!
This cleft of a rock is unsuited to night,
And the sun is just kissing the sea.

Though pleasant it is as a muser to sit
  Where the fairies have hewed me a shelf,
I feel it is time for the muser to flit
  From the work of the affable elf.
Farewell to the sea and its musical surf—
  To its cadence pathetic and slow!
Farewell to the couch and the cushion of turf
  And the sight of the billows below!

A SEASIDE REVERIE

I.

I OPEN the casement that looks on the sea
And the soft airs of summer rush in unto me—
The breath of the ocean asleep at my feet,
Which comes like a spirit my spirit to greet.
The world is all silent, as silent as light;
And I and the stars are alone with the night.

Sweet moments of freedom for soul and for mind,
For dreaming of days left for ever behind,
Refreshing as dew to the sun-stricken grass
When earth is a furnace and skies are as brass!
On mystical pinion sweet Memory flies
With a sigh in her heart and with tears in her eyes!

Her companion is Fancy—sweet wizardly sprite,
So weak in the day but so mighty at night.
The pair wing away o'er the fields of the past,
While the things that were first and the things that were last
Are as if they were present, and Life were a rhyme
Just penned by my hand in the volume of Time.

My life seems a garden through which I have sped,
Where leaves are all sere and sweet blossoms are dead:
But a spirit of loveliness dwells in it still,
Which fills all its valleys and broods on each hill—
As when motion and thought are for e'er and e'er fled
The spirit of life seems to dwell in the dead!

To Fancy and Memory—marvels of life
As closely related as husband and wife—
I freely abandon my soul and my mind
Like rudderless galleys that drift with the wind
On an ocean all shoreless, unknowably deep,
Where lights have gone out and where mariners sleep!

II.

I gaze on the stars in the heaven above,
And they seem like the eyes of the dead that I love—
Of a Father, a Mother, a Sister—the three
Whom I see in my dreams and who beckon to me.
I see them so clearly!—each beckoning hand,
'Mid the mist of the mysteries they understand.

Where the sad light of pathos is constantly cast,
Their voices I hear down the aisles of the past,
And mingling therewith is the echoing tread
Of my life as it steps in the trail of the dead;
And strange is the joy that I feel in the trend
Of the pathway which leads where all mysteries end!

I gaze on and into the heavenly blue,
And I ponder the false as I think of the true,
Till I smile at the one, for the other I crave,
(The other to me is the three in the grave!)

And it stifles all joy as it silences mirth
To think of the distance from heaven to earth.

My mind is appalled at the welling of thought
Concerning the things with which living is fraught!
I picture Eternity laughing at Time
As I float on the boundless and breathe the sublime.
Humanity's follies fade swiftly away
As the laughter of fools on a reckoning day.

I gaze on the sea that lies sighing below,
And what it conceals I am longing to know,
For it spreads like the page of the future of life,
(Oh! my soul is content with its measure of strife,)
But the mist of more mystery hovers thereon
And naught can unveil the concealed etymon.

III.

Oh, treacherous ocean, how quiet you lie!
You seem, gazing upwards, the world's open eye
Upturned to the mighty—its brothers in space,
In the infinite course of an infinite race.
In the field of your vision, Ah, what do you see?
Have you knowledge of things that are going to be?

Oh, many a mariner, many a bark,
Lies sleeping to-night in the depth and the dark
Of thy mighty bosom, unsatisfied sea!
(And many unborn and unbuilt are for thee).
They resemble my hopes in the years that are fled —
Which lie in the sea of my life and are dead.

How many they were, and how bright they appeared,
My bark sailing merrily, merrily steered,

With sail all unsullied and pennons aloft,
O'er a thyme-scented sea, and in zephyrs as soft
As the paradise winds in the realms of the blest—
Beyond the dark river I call Alchahest.

The sail is now sullied—'t is tattered and rent
Like a shot-shattered flag when the battle is spent!
Alas, for the pennons! they flutter no more.
Alas, for the ship! she is on a lee shore.
Like a sea's silvered waves 'neath the face of the moon
Hopes dazzled my eyes, and departed too soon!

Oh, treacherous Time and more treacherous Sea!
Your silence is Eloquence preaching to me
Of the hero, Humanity, battling with Time—
Who sinks like a wreck in the foam-covered brine
The sport of the winds!—of the tides and the mists!
Alas! of such things it is living consists.

Where, where are the friends and companions of youth
So sweet to my memory? Sad is the truth!
All—all have departed and left me alone!
A *few* who are living sail waters unknown—
The *many* departed have sunk in the waves
Which swell in God's acre—the grass-covered graves.

IV.

The silence is broken! The throbbing of oars
Floats in on the air with the voices of rowers;
Soft echoes call out from the wave-eaten caves
Where ocean in quietude lazily laves—
The fishers row out on the tide flowing in
Round the headland that looks like a veiled capuchin.

The rowlocks beat time with the beat of my heart
In a nautic duet with the creak of the thwart,
And I hearken as fainter and fainter it grows
In the swish of the water that rapidly flows
As the hand of the tide is thrust into the breach
Which the river has made in the sand of the beach.

Now—now they are silent! The boats have gone out
To a distance defying the fisherman's shout;
But I picture the course that the steersmen have set
As it points to the floats of the quivering net;
And in fancy I row like the fishermen row,
As I follow in thought where the fishermen go.

V.

The love that I bear for the men of the sea,
Like the blood in my veins, is a portion of me.
Though their faces are weather-beat, wrinkled, and tanned,
I can feel the warm heart through the grasp of the hand.
The buffeting tempest from knavery saves
Men winnowed and washed by the winds and the waves.

Ho! Ho! the delight of the full swelling sail—
Ho! Ho! for the joy of the following gale.
With wind on the quarter a shallop is fleet,
And she leaps, like a steed, with a slackening sheet.
The skipper is monarch, though reeling his realm,
And sharp is the sound of his "Steady your helm!"

Ho! Ho! for the rocks of the spray-covered shore—
The storm-beaten posts of the old haven-door.

From the fast flying bows flies the white of the spray—
Like the dust of a threshold it 's besomed away!
The skipper grows merry, and gaily he sings
"Hurrah! for my bird with the bonnie white wings."

"Hard down!" is the order, and "Haul in the sheets!"
Oh, welcome the sight that the fisherman greets!—
His picturesque cot and its opening door,
His children and wife running down to the shore.
The spray-wetted canvas drops down from the mast,
And the children "Hurrah!" as the anchor is cast.

No warrior ever returned from the field
With victory written in dents in his shield,
His spoils and his prisoners swelling his train,
The throats of his vassals all verbally vain,
Ever tasted of bliss in a higher degree
Than the son-of-salt-water returning from sea.

VI.

Ah! sadly I think of the sombre old town
And the men I imagined were men of renown,
Who seemed to my mind to be vikings of old
Who had come back to earth in the tales I was told—
The men who disputed and spoke with a frown,
The blue-shirted skippers all bearded and brown.

Oh, sweet are such scenes as I look through the years
Which manhood has marred with its toil and its tears!
Long hours of youth, how you revelled in joy!
As the years to the man were the days to the boy.
For the joy of the youth lagged the years to his need:
With an increase of life came an increase of speed.

Along the horizon a blush has been born
Which speaks of the advent of hastening morn—
Bright Venus peeps over the rim of the sea,
So the hours of vigil are over for me.
Sweet Reverie flees like a terror-struck hind,
And the *Present* rolls in on my soul and my mind.

WRECK

I.

THE sun sank down o'er the old grey town
As I said to my Love "Adieu."
My lips he pressed and my hands caressed
As he bade my heart "Be true"—
While the waves came rolling in,
While the waves kept rolling in,
Rolling, rolling,
Slowly rolling,
Softly rolling in.

In the offing seen in the sun's last gleam
His ship with her sails loose lay:
From the verdured trees came a soft South breeze,
And rippled was the broad blue bay—
Where the waves came rolling in,
Where the waves kept rolling in,
Rolling, rolling,
Lightly rolling,
Gaily rolling in.

Oh, far more bright than the bright star-light,
Or the horned moon's tender ray,
Were his tears that night! they dimmed his sight
As he slowly sailed away—
While the waves came rolling in,
While the waves came sobbing in,
Rolling, sighing,
Softly sighing,
Sadly sighing in.

"No more," said he, "of the heaving sea,
No more of the swelling sail,
You 'll no more sigh at the word 'Good-bye,'
Nor fear the rising gale
When the ship comes sailing home,
When the ship comes gaily home,
Sailing, sailing,
Gaily sailing,
Gladly sailing home.

"The crimson ray of the break of day
Will sail in the van of June.
My maid," said he, "I 'll once more see
In the light of the harvest moon—
When my ship comes sailing home,
When my ship comes gaily home,
Sailing, sailing,
Blithely sailing,
Swiftly sailing home!"

II.

The summer long with a laugh, with a song,
And a love like the deep deep sea,
For the hoped-for bliss of my Love's next kiss
I lingered by the sea—
Where the waves came rolling in,
Where the waves kept rolling in,
Softly, sadly,
Gaily, gladly,
Wildly rolling in.

A letter came from a town in Spain,
It dwelt on the wedding day—
On a joyous bell ere the first snow fell
On the shores of the broad blue bay—
Where the waves come rolling in,
Where the waves keep rolling in,
Gaily, gladly,
Softly, sadly,
Madly rolling in.

But the suns of June and the harvest moon
And the hopes of both are dead!
A wintry blast and a broken mast
And cheeks with the roses fled—
Where the waves come rolling in,
Where the waves come tolling in,
Darkly rolling,
Slowly tolling,
Moaning, groaning in!

THE WATER BELLS

I.

TO me the waves that kiss the strand
That skirts the smiling summer-land
Are like to mellow bells—
To gladsome silver bells.
Of joy and hope, it seems to me,
These playful children of the sea
That ring their peals so merrily
Are sounding on the sand.
Right dearly do I love to muse
Where wetted sand and wetted shoes
Have but a married state to choose—
Be it by night or day.
I joy to hear the bells,
The mellow silver bells
Of summer waves that kiss the strand
That skirts the smiling verdant land
That skirts the smiling bay.

A musing mother sits to sew
Where irises abundant grow
And shake their sabre leaves—
Their green and glossy leaves.

She hears the merry waters' lave,
But something in the sounding wave
Has made the musing mother grave
And caused her tears to flow.
Her children on the yellow shore
Are growing merry more and more
With mirth untasted heretofore—
(Their school is far away.)
They hear the mellow bells—
The silver water bells
Chime in the waves that kiss the strand
That skirts the verdant summer-land
That skirts the smiling bay.

My soul divided seems to be
By list'ning to this silver sea.
It seems a pair of cells—
Vibrating sacred cells
Where every rolling wavelet's sound
An echo for itself has found
Vibrating in the depth profound
And unexplored by me.
In *one* the Spirit of the Past
(Who once was an enthusiast
But now a stern iconoclast)
A dwelling finds with me—
And tolls his plaintive bells,
His solemn, muffled knells:
And in his semi-darkened room
With countless passages of gloom
He lists another sea.

For ever through these corridors,
Though thick and bolted are the doors,

I hear the rolling bells—
The plaintive tolling bells!
Of dark regret it seems to me
This tolling must the echo be—
Regret who keeps a Jubilee
Composed of *nevermores!*
By night and day I cannot choose
But listen to the bells and muse.
(Oh, precious time that I must lose
From ev'ry night and day!)
Cease, mournful tolling bells,
Your dreamy solemn knells!
Flow, summer waves that lap the strand!
I feel the touches of a hand
That 's gone from me for aye.

The children brimming o'er with glee,
The tearful mother whom I see
And subtle water bells
Are interweaving spells
Whose mingled cords imprison me,
(How mournfully! How merrily!)
The Past becomes an epopee
Which Memory has read to me—
The cells within my burdened soul
Back slowly their partition roll
(My recollection's written scroll)
Admit the light of day.
Catch! catch the flowing tide!
For time will not abide
Nor summer waves that kiss the strand
That skirts the smiling summer-land
Which skirts the smiling bay.

II.

When angry Winter's potent hand
Shall dash the billows on the strand
  They 'll seem like angry bells,
  And clanging muffled bells;
But joy and hope will stay with me,
Awakened by the summer sea
That rings its peals so merrily
  Along the yellow sand.
Enchanted still I 'll stand and muse
While roaring waves on waves affuse
And bounds of land and sea confuse,
  And frantic is the day!
  Let slowly rolling bells
  Toll muffled-thunder knells
In winter waves, and smite a strand
That skirts a seered and leafless land
  That skirts an inky bay!

The skilful sailor reefs his sail,
And calmly fights the winter gale—
  The youngest sailors know
  It has its time to blow.
It will—it *must* the ocean cross
And make the ships to roll and toss
While quickened at the risk of loss
  Of straining mast and sail.

When blows the winter gale of life
The music of its piercing fife,
And lifts the waves of toil and strife,
  There comes a brighter day
  When peace shall ring her bells—
  Her soothing dulcet bells—
When sunlit waves shall kiss the strand,
The border of a fruitful land;
  And care shall flee away.

AN OUTWARD BOUND

I WATCHED from the beach in the newly-born day
A ship weighing anchor and sailing away.
Borne by the winds from the soft swelling sea
The song of the sailors came floating to me:
Thoughts of their loved ones had softened the strain,
Slow was the measure and sad the refrain—
"Farewell! Farewell!
Our anchor is weighed, and the ship is set free—
Who 'll think of Jack as he tosses at sea?"

The sun in uprising its yellow beams cast
On the ship and her canvas, her pennon and mast.
I saw the ship sail, and I saw nothing more;
But I felt there were hearts which were aching on shore,
And they taught me a song of which sad was the strain,
Slow was the measure and sad the refrain—
"Farewell! Farewell!"
The anchor is weighed and the ship is set free;
But fickle are winds and uncertain the sea.

We know not, Alas! but a storm-wind to-night
Beats on the ship amid waves running white.
Somewhere are seamen who cling to a wreck,
Drifting to lee with a billow-swept deck.

Ay, and fond mothers and children in tears,
Mothers and children who heard amid fears—
"Farewell! Farewell!"
When anchors were weighing and vessels went free
And fathers and husbands were wafted to sea.

When seated at home in the fireside glow,
The tempest without and the pitiless snow,
The moan in the wind and the crash on the beach—
Sad voices of Nature! Oh, what do they teach?
Love for the sailor. Let 's soften the strain,
Slacken the measure and sing the refrain—
"Farewell! Farewell!"
God weigh the anchor and set the soul free—
The soul of the perishing sailor at sea;
When to winds' whistling the wild breakers roar
Give calm to the hearts that are breaking on shore.

A MOTHER'S DREAM

A SHIP at sea afar—afar!
But sailing swiftly in, I see:
And soon across the harbour bar
She 'll bring my lost son home to me.
I see her silken swelling sail,
I see her pennons floating free:
The piping of the fresh'ning gale
Is making sweetest melody.

The harbour bar is safely passed,
The swollen sail has fluttered down,
With joyous plunge the anchor 's cast,
And merry is the fisher town:
I clasp my arms about his neck
And faint I am with over-joy.
Oh, false the story of the wreck—
The story of my drowning boy!

A dream! a dream! Alas! I wake—
I wear a mother's weeds of grief!
Across my soul grief's billows break!
Oh, sleep of joy! Oh, dream so brief!
My arms can never clasp his neck,
The mother know a mother's joy!
Too true the story of the wreck,
The story of the drowning boy!

THE SAILOR'S BURIAL

THE moon shone like a sickle blade
Laid on the field of heaven:
Like clustered gems were faintly seen
The twinkling silver seven.*
The wind was fair, and many ships
Moved on in graceful motion,
But one was like an albatross
That hovers o'er the ocean.

Along her deck came tramping feet
Of men a body bearing,
Each sailor heart for hearts afar
A load of sorrow sharing.
The rite was read: down plunged the dead!
The ship went onwards sailing;
And faster—faster still she fled
To set the widow wailing.

The harbour buoy as if in joy
Danced wildly at her nearing;
The pilot shouted "Ship ahoy!"
And children took to cheering:
Then one by one she dropped her wings
And tossed her anchor over.
What sadness reigned that night within
The cot among the clover!

* The Pleiades.

BEWILDERMENT

MY soul is like a boatman lone—
A boatman sad and lone—
Upon a lonely sea.
My heart is cold—as cold as stone!
As weighty and as hard as stone,
And seems to burden me.

My life is like the rolling deep—
The wide and misty deep—
Whose depth I cannot know:
It seems at times all dreams and sleep,
And then unknown to sleep
And tiding to and fro.

And I am like the boatman's boat—
The frail and tossing boat—
Far—strangely far at sea!
And why and wherefore 't is I float—
So helplessly I float—
Is all a mystery.

My thought is like an ocean mist—
An ever moving mist
Without a soul or bound.
Ah! sadly it distresses me.
The boatman's boat it seems to me
Is turning round and round!

The finny tribes are under me,
The feathered tribes are over me,
And both are dear to me—
    So lonely is the sea!
They seem at times to be events—
Unknown and known events—
    Which so bewilder me.

APPENDIX

I.

NOTE.

KNOWN to and observed by few, some small ships sail every winter from the port of Dundee to hunt the seal along the rocky coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the whale along the shores of Greenland. The voyage and the circumstances under which it is carried out are of such a character that all who love the sailor and the sea can scarcely fail to feel interested.

The work the ships are called upon to perform necessitates the stoutest oaken ribs packed edge to edge throughout the length of their hulls, and heavy oaken planks, inside and out, bolted and fastened as firmly as it is possible for human hands to bolt and fasten. Ships better calculated to contend with wind, wave, and ice do not exist. Such a ship, the reader will please remember, was the *Dolphin*.

As the voyage and its circumstances require exceptionally strong ships, so they require exceptionally stalwart and skilful seamen. Battling with the cold and storms of the waters of the north, year after year, has developed perseverance and deepened endurance in the men who sail this voyage; while the navigating of regions haunted by uncertain currents and veils of impenetrable mist has developed that quickness of decision and readiness of hand so essential to their safety. Such a man was the Captain of the *Dolphin*.

When the fierce and bitter winds of mid-winter are sweeping across the North Atlantic, they sail away from the Firth of Tay, make their way around the north coast of Scotland, and thence across the ocean to St. John's, Newfoundland. As they sail westwards, heavily and more heavily blow the winds, and the ships struggle on their way rolling and plunging with slippery decks, and the mists gathering in ice-masses on their hulls and rigging. At length the fog-vexed

Banks of Newfoundlànd are reached, where lurk the treacherous ice floes, scattered hither and thither for hundreds of miles. Among them move the huge bergs—often observed towering hundreds of feet above the face of the deep. Ever shifting and drifting, these wanderers may be anywhere at any moment. Woe to the ship which comes in contact with one of them! When the frequency with which mist and snow render the keenest vision useless is remembered, the danger of such a calamity becomes self-evident.

The majestic coast of Newfoundlànd at length rises from the waters. Nothing can well exceed the rugged beauty of these great walls of rock, shattered and honeycombed with the ocean billows dashing and thundering against them. During the season in which the Dundee sailors welcome the sight, the red and grey rocks look black in contrast with the spotless snow covering their crests and clinging to their sides wherever a projection affords a resting-place. Under a sky of cloudless beauty the picture is enhanced, and when once seen not soon forgotten.

As a ship approaches St. John's, she appears to be drawing near unbroken cliffs six or seven hundred feet in height. At length a narrow slit is observed, as if a gigantic axe had been brought down by Titanic hands upon the great walls, cleaving them to and beneath the water level. Through this water-floored mountain pass of about six hundred yards in length the ship glides, and then drops anchor in one of the most beautiful havens imaginable.

There the ships prepare for the pursuit of the seal. From six to ten score of Newfoundlànd fishermen are added to the crew of each. They sail in company with a number of others, belonging to Newfoundlànd, along the north-east coast of the island, and farther north along the almost interminable shores of Labrador, ploughing their way hither and thither till the seals are found. Having returned to St. John's, they sail for Davis' Strait when the hills and vales of Newfoundlànd are putting on their green May mantle, to spend the summer pursuing the whale in the light of the midnight sun along the dreary shores of Greenland. In the autumn the ships spread their sails and speed away southwards and homewards.

Such a voyage in such regions and of such duration, has of necessity many romantic features. I venture to think it has much of the poetic also. The surf-worn rock, the sounding wave, the sea's deep blue, the berg's spotless white, the silvery flash of the aurora borealis, the red midnight sun, are each and all full of poetry.

II.

GLOSSARY OF NAUTICAL TERMS.

Abeam. Opposite the ship's side : at right angles with the keel.

Barricade. A short deck across the bows a few feet above the main deck, from which watch is kept.

Barque. A ship with three masts.

Belay. To tie.

Binnacle. The case containing the mariner's compass, and, at night, a light.

Boom. A spar attached to the bottom of certain sails.

Closely-trimmed. The sails so set that the ship's course and the direction of the wind are as nearly as possible contrary.

Close-reefed. With the smallest area of canvas exposed.

Derelict. An abandoned ship.

Dory. A small flat-bottomed boat used in Bank fishing.

Eight Bells. Eight strokes of the ship's bell, indicating four, eight, or twelve o'clock. The strokes are made in twos.

Fore-rigging. The shrouds (rope supports) of the foremast.

Full-rigged ship. A ship with not less than three masts with yards on all.

Hull. The body of the ship.

Jib. A triangular sail attached to the jib-boom.

Keel. The principal timber of the ship, extending from stem to stern at the bottom.

Leeward. On or near the side of the ship which is not exposed to the wind.

Larboard. The left side of the ship looking forward.

Mizzenmast. The mast farthest towards the stern when there are three.

Round To. To wheel ship till she faces the wind.

Outward-bound. Sailing from home.

Port. The left side of the ship looking forward. Used instead of Larboard, which in sound too closely resembles Starboard.

Prore. The bow.

Rail. The uppermost part of the bulwarks surrounding the main deck.

Scuppers. Deck water-escapes.

Sheets. Ropes for altering the position of the sails.

Shrouds. The principal rope supports of the masts attached to the ship's side.

Six Bells. Six strokes of the ship's bell, indicating three, six, or nine o'clock.

Sou'wester. A sailor's waterproof hat.

Spanker. The sail farthest aft.

Starboard. The right side of the ship looking forward.

Thwart. A rower's seat.

Truck. The topmost point.

Three Points. Three small divisions of the mariner's compass.

Tackle. Ropes and blocks for hoisting.

Topsail-leech. A portion of the sail called a topsail.

Trysail. A sail attached to the mizzenmast.

Watch. Half a ship's crew.

Weather-shrouds. The rope supports of the masts on the side exposed to the wind.

Wheel. That with which the helmsman steers the ship.

Windlass. A machine for weighing anchor.

Yawl. A small ship's boat.

Yo Heave Ho! A phrase used by sailors when two or more pull in concert at the same rope.

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